

"A Penny a Story"

N.S.E.

The Black Cat

FOR JULY

10
CENTS



In this number
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we think is the funniest
story we ever published
what do you think?

The Cleverest Short Story Magazine in America

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OFFICE PURRS



THE BLACK CAT is devoted to original, unusual, fascinating stories—every number is complete in itself. It publishes no serials, translations, borrowings, or stealings. It pays nothing for the name or reputation of a writer, but the highest price on record for *stories that are stories*, and it pays not by length, but by strength. Manuscripts should be addressed to Editorial Dept., The Black Cat, Salem, Mass., and must be accompanied by addressed and stamped envelope for return if unavailable. All MSS. are received and returned at their writers' risk.

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The Cat Has Come Back

With this issue The Black Cat goes into the hands of new management. We have signalized the event by giving you nine stories in this number (a regular feature to be continued) instead of the usual six stories; by printing them on a better grade of paper and in a new type face. We know you will be pleased with nearly twice as many stories as you have been enjoying and we think our new paper and new type a happy combination of potential virtue and value in a nation where a great majority of its sons and daughters are premature visitors to the oculist. *There will be no increase in price.* We see an unfilled niche in the magazine world for a ten-cent fiction magazine and we hope to make The Black Cat fill it to the point of forcing the Sherman Trust law to beg for mercy.

Looking Ahead

We propose to make The Black Cat a better magazine than it has ever been in its long and honored career. The past to us will be but records and accomplishments to top. We realize we have tackled a man's size job and even at this early stage of our journey we see hard work peeking from around every corner. But we are full of the hope of youth and we like our job, so to the adventure.

It's a good job, too. Where can man better employ himself than helping to make easy the journey of his fellows through this vale of tears? There come to the best of us fretful hours when little

blue devils need throttling; when our life-tired brain miserably fails to picture the W. J. Bryan lining to the dark clouds that encompass us. It is then that we yearn to be lifted out of a dull, prosaic existence and be whisked away to the phantom land of blood-tingling adventure and expectant mystery. And if we succeed in our job every number of The Black Cat will be a seven-league pair of boots to make your trip faster. Like the Irishman who explained he drank to drown his sorrows and then drank to celebrate his good fortune we hope to make The Black Cat a care-killer and a joy-celebrater minus the morning-after effects of Pat's potions.

Modern Magazine Fiction

In this day of frenzied-fiction buying the most extravagant prices are being paid for *big name* material. These authors, protected by their contracts calling for recompense on the absurd buying basis of so much per word, turn out stories running from seven to twelve thousand words in length, many of which in our humble opinion could be told better in from three to four thousand words (O. Henry, the master, seldom exceeded five thousand words). And it is you who must pay for this ridiculous vogue. For ten cents we can give you nine good "live" stories free from monotonous descriptions and other tricks of the writing game grouped under the trade name of "padding."

After all, the real merit test of any

magazine with you is not how many stories are in an issue but *how many stories in the issue you read*. It's not how many times a ball player goes to the plate—it's how many times he hits the ball safely that makes his batting percentage.

We plan to give you in every issue of The Black Cat proportionately more good solid reading for ten cents than you will get in the average fifteen cent magazine.

Something about Writers

To do all this we must scour the land for good stories, for The Black Cat kind of stories, the type of fiction you have stamped with the approval of your long and loyal patronage. In the pages of The Black Cat the genius of Jack London found its first encouragement. We hope in time new Jack Londons and new O. Henrys will reach their public through the same pages. Speaking of writers, unfortunately many of us err in picturing authors as the caricatures we see in the comic(?) papers. The funny man's conception of a writer is as much a monstrosity as the all too familiar stage Englishman. In all lands and all times the story teller's place has been an honored one and justly so, too. Few of us can recall fonder moments than those spent nose-deep in the wonderland pages of Hans Andersen or the later and more exciting days of Henty, Alger, yes, and those stolen golden moments of Buffalo Bill and the intrepid Jesse James, whose yellow covered adventures were dexterously hidden behind the large pages of the big geography. "To forget" is a world-old cry and where can be found a more natural and more wholesome sedative than the necromancy of the story teller's art? The cruel jest has stung many a sensitive spirit and the fear of ridicule has nearly as often stifled the birth of genius. O. Henry's reply to a proposed lionizing reception,

"I am only a poor boy from the country," is an eloquent description of a modest and child-like nature, the kind of spirit that usually accompanies the genius that was his.

Our Promise to You

The fetish of big names has never blinded its editorial judgement or dulled its pages. And we promise you there will be no deviation from this rule; no breaking of faith. True, we expect to publish stories by well-known authors but it will be the story, not the author's name, that will win its place in the pages of The Black Cat.

In short, our policy will be to give you more and better short stories than an exchange of a dime ever produced before, and the kind of stories that for freshness and individuality you can find in no other magazine.

We believe in the foregoing we have given you a fairly comprehensive idea of what we propose doing. We believe the nine snappy stories in this number bear out in a measure some of these promises.

The jury is out.

Introducing Luke McLuke

On the editorial page of the Cincinnati Enquirer, daily appears from ten to a dozen choice witty observations on everything in general and nothing in particular under the title heading of "Luke McLuke Says." Luke is J Syme Hastings. Beginning in this number Luke will also contribute monthly to The Black Cat his keen and humorous and often packed-full-of-truth observations. Next to "Mr. Dooley" Luke is the wittiest and wisest brain child of his generation. He is refreshingly original and thoroughly human. He loves life and talks like a man with a good digestion. And a world of people with those two qualities would wipe out war, divorce, and Mexico in ten days. Meet Luke. He's on page 30.

The Shadow on the Wall

BY GEORGIA ROBERTS DURSTON

Here is a thrilling, dramatic story, with an Edgar Allen Poe touch, of a lonely toll house, mysterious and murder-smirched.



STANCH, faithful, and willing though he was, the doctor's horse stopped under the hood of the old tollhouse, and refused to venture farther in the dense blackness and wild uproar of the storm.

"Thank God, I am on my way home!" breathed the doctor, as he remembered the condition of the patient whom he had just left, and rejoiced to think that his visit had taken the malady just in time.

Pushing aside the oilskins and robes and carefully placing on the seat of the buggy, a small object he had held in his lap, the doctor led the way into the barn, which stood near the tollhouse, and, by the light of his pocket flash, blanketed the exhausted horse. Then, taking up the small object again, and fishing a lantern from under the seat, he struggled to the door of the tollhouse and tried the knob.

It was unfastened and the doctor entered. He lighted the lantern, and, as the flame steadied, the object cuddled under his arm proved to be a tiny bulldog, which leaped to the floor, and with mischievous curiosity began a close scrutiny of the premises. Housed, and safe from the blasts of wind that screamed about the old

stone building, the little animal paid no attention to the raging storm, but pried into musty corners and dodged behind and under the scattered pieces of decrepit furniture.

The doctor placed the lantern on a table and sat down, after gingerly trying the chair. As he filled his pipe and lighted it, he recalled his last visit to the tollhouse. Across the room there was still a stain on the worn flooring. He remembered the sudden summons and the wild-eyed boy who had come clattering on horseback to bring the news. A hurried drive had brought him quickly to the place; but One unseen, mysterious, inevitable, followed at his elbow. It was Death; and the ghastly creature with cut throat, who had summoned him, had scarcely time to address a dozen struggling, bubbling words to the doctor, who knelt close to hear them.

Old John Dirk, dying by his own hand, had turned to the doctor and spoken useless words.

"Mary—Mary—" he gasped.

He struggled as the grim invisible hand he had summoned, fell on his heart. "Doctor—I put—"

The doctor remembered hearing some one whisper, "He wanted to tell where his wife's money is." At any rate, not a penny had been found; and Charity buried the muti-

lated clay of old John Dirk.

Mary Dirk's money—a pitiful sum inherited from a miserly father—was the subject of endless quarrels between man and wife. Not one cent would Mary spend or give. Her frail little body stood unshaken before blood-curdling threats of violence; her stubborn will leaped nimbly to meet every trick and turn of which sly old John was capable.

The Dirks had lived in the toll-house for years. After the road over which it leaned had been abandoned, they remained until the drowning of old Mary Dirk in Green Lake, the pond just behind the house. This dark, sly, silent sheet of water was said to be bottomless. At all events, Mary Dirk's weazened little body was never seen after the evening when she started across to get a mess of wild blackberries growing on the opposite bank. The overturned boat and her old sunbonnet limply floating, had startled John Dirk into hoarse cries for help; but Green Lake refused to respond to the feverish dragging and blasting that disturbed the dark surface. Soon after, somebody's barn burned down, or a thoroughbred cow died, and Mary Dirk was forgotten.

John, who owed the doctor ninety cents, came and paid him seventy-five of it and said good-by. He was going away. He could not stay in the old place alone, he said. So he, too, disappeared.

Another family took the house and left it in a panic, swearing that it was haunted. After that, it stood idle, growing more and more ominous and sinister in its isolation and

decay. At the end of five years, John Dirk, silent and dark as ever, appeared in town, and drifting back to the old stone house, he had lived **there**, apparently feeding on his loneliness until the day when he had cut his throat and died with the secret of Mary Dirk's money still on him.

The doctor knocked the ashes from his pipe and turned to watch the dog, which was acting strangely. He stood stiff-legged and bristling, his eyes fixed upon the rickety door. As a fierce blast shook it, it slowly sagged open a foot and stuck against the warped flooring. The doctor rose and closed it; but the dog paid no attention to him. He glared fixedly at space, shaking violently. The doctor seated himself again and spoke his name. Never had he seen such abject terror in a living thing.

"Gruff, come here," he commanded.

The dog's eyes slowly traveled along the dingy wall; then, his legs doubling weakly under him and still with fixed gaze, he began slowly to back toward his master. He moved stealthily, as though he expected to be seized. Slowly, slowly, he stepped, until he felt the doctor's hand upon him; then he sprawled and scrambled into his lap, pressing close against him. But he could not gain refuge even there. He found his voice; and, screaming, leaped to the door and flung himself upon it, scratching and digging madly. Flecks of foam were on his bare teeth. The doctor, dumb with amazement, opened the door.

At that moment, the wind suddenly stopped blowing, and the clamor

and din of the storm was succeeded by absolute calm and silence. As the dog shot out into the pitchy darkness, the doctor listened to his receding cries as he dashed away in the direction of the distant village. "Well, certainly that is the limit," mused the doctor, as he started for his lantern.

Before he reached it, something arrested him. He, too, felt a chill of cold, unspeakable horror pervade him, and he fixed his eyes, as Gruff had, on the opposite wall. As he stared, he saw a shadow move along its dingy surface. Slowly, very slowly, it passed. He managed to reach the lantern, and with a shaking hand, lifted it from the table and set it on the floor beside him; but the changing of the light made no difference in the appearance of the bending, wavering shadow.

Now, a sort of paralysis seized him; he remained motionless, half stooping. The room was large, and across its length, crept the phantom, which, as he stared unwinkingly at it, assumed outlines ominous and familiar. The doctor's hair crept upon his scalp; deadly nausea overwhelmed him as the shadow moved on, one hand outstretched as though pointing.

At last, he knew: it was John Dirk!

Then, as the doctor stood helpless in the grip of cold horror of which he

had never dreamed, the breathless stillness was broken by a crash of thunder which seemed to shake the very earth; and with it came a blinding glare of green light which, for a long, aching instant, filled the room.

When the doctor opened his eyes, dawn, gray and sodden, dimly illuminated the wrecked house. The doctor lay full length on the floor. He was unharmed, but badly shocked, and he pulled himself to his feet with difficulty. He looked about. The table on which the lantern had first stood was in splinters.

As his eyes accustomed themselves to the half light, he saw that the opposite wall was shattered. A heap of broken stone and plaster lay at the base, and sprawled on the heap was a pile of something—rags, perhaps, that looked curiously like a bent and distorted figure. As the doctor approached it, he felt again the cold horror chill him.

Shaking it off, he stooped.

Day was breaking and a dazzling flood of light filled the room.

The doctor stared. Released from the old bricked-in fireplace, lay all that was left of Mary Dirk!

The look of mutinous silence that must have galled and goaded John Dirk, as she watched the endless search for her money, was still plain on her parchment features.

Her pipe-stem throat was cut from ear to ear.



When Time Ran Backward

BY HARRY KEELER

Attracted by the alluring label description, "Turns Time Backward," an adventurous young man drinks from a mysterious — "Jersey Lightning" was well-water compared to his drink—results considered.



It was a peculiarly shaped bottle made of dark green glass. Its base, round and covered with corrugations, rose to a tapering neck. In appearance it was not unlike what is known as a Venetian flask. Inside was a liquid of the same color, so I discovered later, as absinthe—but not nearly so viscous. A pasteboard tag, tied to the neck, bore the mystifying printed words:

"Turns Time Backward."

I had just moved into my newly rented quarters at the boarding house of Mrs. O'Hara on North State Street. Under ordinary circumstances, I would have become very wroth at finding an article left behind by some former lodger, but in this case I was too perplexed and too full of wonder at these cryptic words to give way to any anger.

My first impulse, of course, was to summon my landlady and give the bottle over into her keeping.

"Turns Time Backward." What on earth did it mean? Was it some kind of a joke?

That the gentleman who had rented the rooms before I moved into them was a peculiar chap, I gathered from one of Mrs. O'Hara's bursts of loquaciousness at the time I paid my

first deposit. It seems that in addition to being a student of the occult, he was an ardent collector of strange articles from the Orient.

Again I studied the words on the card, "Turns Time Backward." Was it possible that he could have stumbled upon a secret that would—

I drew the cork and sniffed at the contents. The sweetish odor emanating from the liquid within showed that it could not be wholly unpalatable. Although a teetotaler, I had always gloried in the fact that at some time or other in my life I had at least tasted every fancy and mixed drink known to civilization. Therefore, I reasoned, I ought, at least, to become familiar with some of this "turns-time-backward" wine, now that the opportunity had presented itself.

My eyes roved over the dresser in search of a small glass. Not being a habitual toper, that article was, of course, lacking. My gaze, however, fell upon the large tumbler that usually holds my toothbrush. Good enough. I drew the cork again and filled the glass nearly to the brim.

"No use of being stingy with another man's goods," I remarked genially to myself. "Might as well give Time a good reversal."

Apprehensive of the approaching supper time, I glanced at my watch and found it to be five-thirty, P.M.

Then I downed the tumbler's contents.

Now I feel quite certain that those same contents could never make a world-wide reputation for themselves as a beverage. Yet, on the other hand, they were not half bad, once they were down. They seemed to present a combination of odd flavors such as I had never tasted before.

Nothing unusual occurred, though. I dropped into the easy chair by the window and drummed with my fingers upon the arm pieces, waiting expectantly to see what effects, if any, should be produced.

The only thing noticeable was a sudden surge of heat that seemed to spread instantly to the tips of my fingers and the ends of my toes. These last-named members began to feel as though they were radiating warmth and life through millions of miles of space. I felt slightly weary, and yet a trifle elated. For a few seconds my head swam. Then things cleared up.

With the consciousness that I had hoaxed myself, I gazed out of my window which faced Chicago's great West Side. Then I rubbed my eyes in amazement.

The sun, that not two minutes ago was touching the horizon, had climbed back and now stood several degrees above its former position. Such a thing was unheard of. Then again I rubbed my eyes. It was unbelievable.

Hastily I rose to my feet and seized my hat. I felt that I must get outside at once and join the immense throngs that would be watching this strange phenomenon from every street corner.

Fortunately, I met no one to delay me as I made my way downstairs to

the front door. Arriving on the front steps, I stood paralyzed, my mouth wide open.

The mechanics of the universe were running in the wrong direction.

I could see people everywhere calmly walking up or down the street backward, with as much unconcern as though they were doing it in the ordinary way. Street cars, automobiles, grocery wagons—all ran in a direction opposite to that which they normally pursued.

I glanced at my watch again. Its hands pointed to five o'clock. Almost at the same instant, the bells of St. James's church nearby, chimed distinctly five times. I must get down at once to the club on Michigan Avenue, interview Caruthers, my life-long friend and companion, and ascertain the actual cause of this revolutionary state of affairs.

I hurried to the corner. Here I perceived a stout man, grasping a newspaper in his hand, gallop up to a newsboy, taking strange backward jumps not unlike those of a kangaroo. The boy took the paper from him, handed him a cent and then went down the street himself, hoppity-skip, backward.

I mounted a car, taking good care to board one which, although it was headed north, was, in reality, retracing its way south.

As the conductor's broad back loomed up in front of me, I watched him. He suddenly jerked a bell cord. The register, which up to the time had shown a total collection of one hundred fares, dropped suddenly to ninety-nine. Then the blue-coated

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official turned and gravely handed me a nickle.

What else could I do but accept it? I found myself now to be only a poor human atom to whom no course was left but to take matters as I found them. No doubt, Caruthers would explain everything.

The ride downtown was itself uneventful. My heart rose continually in my mouth lest we meet with a collision, since the mortorman stood upon, what was for us, the rear platform, and carefully studied the stretch of track which we had already passed over.

At Madison and South State Streets I dismounted. The clock on the Marshall Field building showed the time to be a quarter of four.

For a moment, I paused to peer in the windows of the basement press-rooms of the "Chicago Evening Vulcan." Imagine my surprise to see thousands of newspapers, that were neatly stacked in bundles, being fed into the folding machines, passing through the presses, and coming subsequently out in the form of rolls of clean white paper which were instantly carted back to the storerooms.

I hurried to the club. I felt certain that I would find Caruthers in the card room playing his inevitable game of poker—and I was not disappointed. He was seated at a square table with three others whom I knew slightly and he nodded absent mindedly to me as I stood looking on.

He had a great pile of unstacked chips in front of him. Just as I arrived on the scene he shoved them forth to the center of the table.

"Gentlemen," he grunted, "in a friendly game such as ours, I could never prolong the betting when I hold an invincible hand. I have here that rare bird, the Royal Flush. The pot is mine."

Blakely, to his right, never blinked an eye at such extraordinary news. "I call Whitson," he said, and forthwith proceeded to abstract ten red chips from the pile in the center.

Whitson, to the right of Blakely, leaned forward and he, too, removed ten red chips from the rapidly decreasing heap, remarking quietly, "I call Barberry's ten."

Barberry, at Whitson's right, drew out the remaining ten colored disks, which left but a few scattered white ones in the center of the table. "I'm betting ten reds," he stated, "on the hypothetical strength of three big aces."

Whereupon I fled precipitately.

Could it be possible, I thought, that I was losing my reason? My watch now showed the time to be only five minutes past three. It was very warm. Perhaps the heat had been affecting me. A brief sojourn among the cooling breezes out at the South Shore bathing beach would undoubtedly restore me to my natural self again. Perhaps a cold plunge in the lake would help to right matters.

The beach was crowded. Numberless bathers slipped from the tiny dressing rooms at the rear of the beach and made their way backward into the waves. But the most remarkable thing—they were dripping wet before they entered the water. Those who emerged from the lake, particularly

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the women, did so very gingerly, an inch at a time, sending up shriek after shriek—but as they reached the sands they were perfectly dry.

With despair in my heart and curses against the glass of green liquid that I had so foolishly imbibed, I left the beach without taking a plunge. I was beginning to realize that things were really as they seemed. I saw now, when it was too late, that I had precipitated an extremely unfortunate state of affairs either for myself or for the world in which I had lived, by meddling with something that had not concerned me.

By noon time I was seated on a bench in Grant Park, wondering how to adjust myself to these conditions.

For nearly five long hours I sat there. My ruminations came to nothing. The sun crept closer and closer to the eastern rim of Lake Michigan and, when the factory whistles blew the announcement that the hour of 7 A.M. was at hand, I realized with a start that there was nothing I could do but return to my rooms and make the best of things as they now were.

Fumbling in my clothes, I found the stub of a cigar. I remembered knocking its ashes off yesterday and slipping it into my vest pocket for future use—a reprehensible habit, to be sure. Lighting it, I gloomily puffed away at it. The more I puffed the longer it grew. When, of its own accord, it finally went out, I examined it. My fingers held a perfect Havana. So I flung it bitterly away, knowing now that in this topsy-turvy world, as a complete cigar it had entirely lost its utility.

I did not search for a car to take me home. I walked slowly along North State Street toward my rooms. The streets became more deserted until, finally, only a few nocturnal fishermen, lugging heavy strings of fish, could be seen making their way backward to the lake.

As I marched along, my hands thrust deep in my pockets, I saw window-shade after window-shade in different houses, suddenly drawn down. Immediately after the lowering of each one, an alarm clock would strike sharply—then all would be silent.

Last night had returned.

Noiselessly, I let myself into my boarding house. I reached my room and, in the gray light that usually precedes the dawn, flung myself in the easy chair and dozed off.

When I awoke I had a headache such as I never hope to have again. My throat was parched and dry, giving me a thirst that seemed infinite in magnitude. Rising to my feet, I lighted the gas and peered at my watch. Its hands were both touching the XII. Then I gazed in the direction of my dresser.

The green flask stood where I had left it, but the breeze from the window had whipped the tag over. From where I stood I could read:

One Quart of
JENKS'S PEERLESS SCALP
TONIC

MAKES TIME GO BACKWARD BY
PUTTING HAIR ON BALD HEADS
COMPOSED OF BENEFICIAL VEGETABLE
OILS DISSOLVED IN
50 PER CENT OF PURE ALCOHOL

The Man Who Shunned the Light

BY ARTHUR LEEDS

A professor of chemistry, with the mark of Cain on his brow and conscience, crazed with his crime, proves the success of a laboratory discovery by suicide.



RECOGNIZED Langhorn's handwriting the moment I glanced at the envelope; and to say that I was surprised at hear-

ing from him, after so long a silence, is putting it mildly. But my astonishment and curiosity were tripled at the message which the envelope contained.

"Do not be alarmed, my dear Marden," it read, "at the contents of this letter, my first to you in so long a time. But above all, I beg of you, if ever friendship bound us together, do not fail in doing just what I am about to ask of you. If you do this for me you will see me once more; but you will never talk with me again. Yet, I have another and a very important message for you. There is something that you, if not the whole world, should know, and which will be communicated to you when next you see me. I have been living for the past two years and a half at number 108 West 57th Street—the old Partington residence—and for the past six or seven months I have been entirely alone. Now, Marden, I want you to come to me at this address, any time this afternoon *after two o'clock*. The experiment upon which I am now engaged will have been fully completed by that time; and I do not wish to have anyone—not even you—disturb me before I have quite finished. You will find the front door unlocked. Admit yourself, and come straight into my workroom, the door of which faces the front entrance. Do not fail me, old friend; there is much that you should learn concerning me and my work."

In spite of Langhorn's admonition not to be alarmed, there were two

things in his note which puzzled and even startled me considerably. What did he mean by saying that if I complied with his wishes I might see him *once* more? And above all, what did he mean by saying that though I should *see* him again, I might never *talk* with him thereafter? Surely my old friend had not, in some strange way, been stricken dumb? Yet, what else could prevent him from conversing with me?

It was then eleven in the forenoon, and I spent the best part of the time until two o'clock making wild guesses as to what Langhorne could possibly mean, and what it was that he so earnestly desired to communicate to me. The taxicab which I engaged took me to the address mentioned in the note in less than half-an-hour; and as I dismissed the driver and mounted the steps, I remembered thinking that, in this great city of New York, a man might very easily become as far removed from his former associates, if he so desired, as if he were to journey to St. Petersburg or Yokohama.

As I opened the door and stepped into the hallway, I noticed that the accumulated dust of many months covered everything. I suppose I am somewhat of a crank on that subject, for on discovering nothing anywhere that resembled a hat-rack or hall-tree, I continued to hold my hat in my hand

in preference to laying it on the heavily coated chair standing against the wall on my left. It did not need my old friend's letter to convince me that he had been living alone for a long time! And what in the name of common sense was the man doing with the whole house—as it seemed to me, if one could judge by the heaviness of the air—sealed up on a stifling August afternoon? The place was as musty and close-smelling as a department store on a Monday morning; I held the street-door open for a moment or two, allowing the bright sunlight and what little breeze was stirring to enter, before I advanced farther into the hall.

At the end of this hallway, and facing the front entrance, was another door covered with a heavy damask curtain. I closed the street-door quietly, and advancing toward the rear door, laid my hand on the knob. I cannot explain what it was that made me hesitate to turn it. I can only compare the sensation to that which one experiences when, having laid a hand on one side of an electric knife-switch, he hesitates to complete the circuit by touching the other side, not knowing the severity of the shock which he may receive.

A moment's pause, and then the curiosity to know all that my old friend's letter had meant, urged me on. I swung open the door and advanced into the room.

The stuffiness of the hallway was nothing compared with the odorsome closeness of this apartment. I glanced about, wondering if it were possible that the room was without a window. As my eyes turned to the left,

however, I saw that a window was there; but it, like the door by which I had entered, was heavily curtained. Observing this, I seemed to become conscious, for the first time, of the fact that the room was lighted solely by the electrolier that blazed down from the center of the ceiling—at half past two on a bright autumn afternoon! If Langhorne had recently been at work or reading in this room, why did he choose the electric light instead of the illumination provided by nature?

The intense curiosity, mingled with a vague alarm, that had filled my mind since reading his note, was growing momentarily greater. Where was he now? Why was he not here to receive me?

A second glance around the room showed me almost exactly what I had expected to find there. In the corner to the right of the curtained window, stood a roll-top desk, before which was placed a three-fold, tapestry-covered screen, in such a way as to hide the greater part of the desk from my view. Shelves, reaching to the ceiling, lined that side of the room opposite the window; these were partly filled with books, portfolios and scientific magazines.

There were, however, several things in the room from which I deduced the fact that Langhorne had been living, practically, in this one large apartment, for some time, at least. In one corner stood a rather short Davenport-bed. Not far from it, and connected by a rubber tube with an iron pipe rising a few inches from the floor, was a small gas-stove standing on a little table. It was evident that

Langhorne had not only been sleeping in this room of late, but had also prepared his own meals there. I remembered having noticed a first-class restaurant only a block down the street, and my surprise increased accordingly. My friend's epicurean tastes in the past had more than once caused me to warn him against dire results of eating and drinking too well.

Everywhere about were distributed the tools, so to speak, of his trade—a professor of chemistry. Langhorne, wild as he had been in his student days, was always an enthusiast, loving his work as a part of himself. His lapses into dissipation served only to emphasize more strongly the true nature of the man—his determination, his originality of thought and ideas, his firmness in the face of argument, (even of ridicule, when he put forward a theory too startlingly original to be passed over in mere controversy), and his absolute devotion to his life work.

I was aware of the fact that up to the time when I had completely lost track of him, about three years before, he had contributed regularly to various medical and scientific journals; of late, however, I had not seen his name mentioned in any of the reviews, nor, so far as I was aware, had any of his articles been published. But I knew Langhorne was the kind of a man who, having his work to carry on, could readily adapt himself to any part of the world; and for some time it had been my belief that he had gone abroad, without advising any of his old friends, and was now, probably, conducting his experiments and

researches in one of the European capitals.

It suddenly occurred to me that the professor might have stepped out to make a purchase at one of the nearby stores; that that was his reason for telling me in his note to admit myself upon my arrival. Concluding that this must be the case, I prepared to sit down and await his return. No chair was to be seen, however; the only seat was the Davenport in the corner. But a glance in the direction of the screen caused me to conclude that there would naturally be an office-chair before the desk which, as I have said, the screen almost hid from view.

Advancing, I took hold of it by both sides and drew the folds together, preparatory to putting it to one side. As it closed up, it almost fell from my hands as I stepped back in startled bewilderment.

A chair was there, as I had expected. But in it sat Randall Langhorne, head and shoulders bent over the desk, his face the color of the cigar ash that lay on a little tray at his side. The left arm hung straight down over the side of the chair; the hand was tightly clenched. His right arm was sprawling across the desk, and the hand, which gripped a graduate-glass, was resting against the drawers at the back. There still remained on the inside of the glass perhaps a teaspoonful of dark, purplish liquid, and the fingers which grasped it, as well as the white blotter beneath, were stained a deep brown, recalling the discoloration left by a solution of potassium permanganate.

After the first shock, I had invol-

untarily reached out to grasp Langhorne's shoulder. But even as I did so, I paused and drew back my arm.

His face was turned to the right; his eyes, wide open, seemed fixed with staring fascination at the glass in his hand. And in the corner, close to the hand, an envelope stood upright against the drawer. On it I read the one word—"Marden." In front of this, flat on the desk, lay a sheet of typewriter bond paper, upon which, in large letters, had been written the startling request:

"Do not touch me, Marden! Do not lay a finger upon me until you have read this letter!"

In spite of myself, I shuddered as I read the admonition. There was something terrifying, some sinister suggestion in the words. Not that it was necessary to touch the man to tell that he was dead. The ashen face, the wide, staring eyes, the blackened lips, stained with the same brown color which disfigured the hand—from all these signs I judged that at least an hour must have passed since life had fled from this pitiable heap before me. It was the note that I dreaded; some unknown horror seemed to be lurking in its message. In spite of myself, I felt that I would give almost anything if I could only avoid opening it at all.

But Langhorne's last wish, his dying request, in fact, had been that I read this message and share his secret, whatever it was, with him. With a trembling hand I picked up the envelope and tore it open, and read:

"My dear old friend, in this, my last

hour, I can turn only to you. Not for pity, though, Marden; pity and sympathy are not for such as I. I seek only your assistance in what will be my final experiment. I have met with considerable success in the past, as you know. I have proved my theories correct, as a rule; only once or twice have my experiments failed. My heartfelt prayer to God, now is, that this last test of my knowledge will be successful also. First, however, I must tell you my miserable story.

"You will remember the night when, just after you had returned from the Pacific coast, we met at the bar of the Cadillac. Kenyon was with me when you came in, and so was young Ludlow—the fellow some of the boys used to call 'the Lucios diamond kid.' You will remember, also, that while you were with us, Ludlow behaved himself extremely well—for Ludlow.

"About ten o'clock, you left us, saying that you were going home. After you had gone, we drifted over to Churchill's; and it was shortly after one o'clock when Ludlow and I (Kenyon went off about midnight) were requested to leave the back room of a saloon in the neighborhood of Columbus Circle. I can remember passing the monument as we started home. I hadn't told you where I was living, Marden—in fact, I hadn't told anyone. Knowing me as you did in the old days, you know why. When I worked, I worked with all there was in me to labor with. I didn't want to be disturbed; I didn't want to be tempted away when my work called me. I knew my weakness; so I cut myself off from everyone. I met you three fellows that night by the merest chance.

"But it was the devil in the form of Ludlow who walked with me that night, Marden. As we staggered along, he kept up a running fire of sneering remarks. First I was a 'would-be-famous scientist.' Then I was 'the greatest bluff that ever graduated.' Finally he declared that I was a 'hermit, a recluse merely for the sake of being called eccentric, but clever.'

"The liquor, I suppose, must have made me good-natured, rather than otherwise, for I simply laughed at his insults; and we went on together. Then, two blocks away from here, I said good-night and tried to leave him; but it was of no avail. Again and again, he asked me to take him to where I was living. At last he dared me to take him home with me. Mad, drunken fool that I must have been, I did.

"What followed, I must write down quickly. Even now my hand trembles, and I need all my strength for what is to come.

"Ludlow threw himself into this very chair where I now sit, one leg over the arm, swinging himself in a half-circle. At once he recommenced his drunken abuses, and I, as before, laughed at him. Suddenly, he took from his pocket a flask of brandy—I had no idea that he had any liquor upon him—and, after swallowing nearly half of it, he tossed it over to me. With drunken recklessness, I drained the flask; and just then Ludlow swung around and faced the desk.

"Marden, you remember the woman in my case? The *one* woman? I know you do; so I won't disgrace her fair name by putting it into this horrible confession. But *her* photograph was there, on top of the desk; and as Ludlow saw it he snatched it down. With a laugh that seemed to me like the cry of a beast, he swung around and faced me again.

"I won't—I could not repeat his words, old friend; they were unutterably vile. And he meant *that* of *her*, Marden, the woman upon whose grave, every Sunday since God took her from me, I had placed the white roses. I heard only his first sentence or two; from that moment, as God is soon to judge me, I forgot what really happened. I can dimly remember that Ludlow, very suddenly, became silent. Then, like one under the influence of an anæsthetic, I lost consciousness of everything.

"And, now, Marden, the end, but briefly. It must have been the morning sun, falling across my face as it entered this window which you see now darkly curtained, which at last awakened me. The moment I sat up I saw Ludlow; and in that moment I knew that he was dead. Then, in a flash, all came back to me, dimly—all, that is, up to the time he spoke those words. Weakly, I got up and went to him. As I leaned over the body, I saw, with horror, the deep cut in his left temple, and then the empty flask lying on the rug at his feet. That flask had been in my hand as he started to speak of her—the last words he had ever spoken! But he had driven me to it—he, the beast, the loose-tongued idler! Then the greatest horror of all came home to me. No one had seen Ludlow entering the house with me. I could easily tell Kenyon that he had left me and started for his home. I could just as easily dispose of Ludlow's body—which, Marden, I finally did—in such a way that it would never be found. But could I, could I ever again be happy, care-free, unhampered by the guilty chain that I had bound myself with on that accursed night of folly and dissipation? Would not the accusing sunlight, God's sunlight, which now flooded the room, forever cry out and mock me?

Would I not hear forever in my ears the words, 'At the setting of one sun you were an innocent man. Life was yours to make what you would of; Fame was yours to win; Honor was yours, and Happiness—the memory of Love, sweeter, often, than the realization, belonged to you. But the night came in between; and at the rising of another sun you were a murderer, a useless thing, an outcast until life shall be over for you. Only then will come peace!'

"Marden, from that day to this, I have never seen the light—God's light. I could not; the horror of the past would only have been intensified. Up to about six months ago, I kept one servant, a combined valet and assistant. He was a good fellow and faithful, but I let him go. Since then I have been quite alone. The telephone brought to me all that I required; but everything was left in the hallway; I never saw the front door open. I have contributed to the scientific journals frequently—you may have read something by 'Franklin Mathison.'

"But, now, Marden, it must end. 'Only then will come peace!' Now, I ask your aid—it will be easily given. For two months I have been working continuously on something which, had I lived an innocent man, might have brought me fame. Years ago, I conceived the idea of a liquid which, when injected into a dead body as we now inject embalming fluid, would have a directly opposite effect to that produced by the latter preparation. In other words, instead of preserving the body, it would destroy it utterly, bone and tissue alike. My theory was that the liquid would be entirely absorbed by every portion of the body, so that, having finished its subtle work of destruction, it would leave the corpse literally a mass of clay in the form of a man or woman—clay that could be almost instantly converted into an unrecognizable heap of dust. The idea was originally suggested by the remarks of a cousin of mine, who had a horror of being buried alive, and who, nevertheless, dreaded the idea of cremation. Again, I thought would not this be the easiest and most practical way of disposing of the bodies of executed criminals? There would also be a dozen different uses to which it could be successfully put in surgical work of different kinds.

"Well, old friend, I have at last completed my work. I believe I have succeeded; but it will be for you to prove that. The failure or success of this, my last experiment, will never be known to me. But, I pray, you know not, Marden, how earnestly I pray, that it may be as I have hoped.

"By the addition of one other ingredient I have prepared a special fluid which, when I *drink* it, as I shall do after signing this, will, I believe, produce in my body the changes of which I have spoken. Thus will I efface myself from the world of men—and of sunlight. Thus, in this death-chair, will I give my life to atone for the taking of *his* life, unworthy though he was. You will keep my secret, I know. God grant that the keeping of it may not weigh too heavily upon you! And now for the final test, and may God have mercy upon me! May happiness and peace be yours, Marden. Farewell!"

Tears filled my eyes as I concluded this terrible letter, the laying bare of a man's innermost soul. I knew Langhorne's sensitive nature; I realized how the constant brooding upon his crime had so preyed upon him, that the poor, broken, prematurely gray-haired wreck of a man that now sprawled in the office-chair was the result. As for his "experiment"—poor Langhorne. I understood, now, that toward the end, his mind had given away, and that the swallowing of the draught in the graduate-glass had produced no other result than he might have brought about with a well-aimed revolver bullet.

Something seemed to bedim the brightness of the electrolier, and a gloom which penetrated to the depths of my soul filled me as I laid the letter back on the desk and looked around. The Davenport caught my eye; I would lay the remains of my poor friend there, while I went out to notify the proper authorities. That part of the letter referring to his crime, I would destroy; and his secret, as he had said, would be safe

with me. The other parts of his note would make plain the manner in which he had ended his own life. I could, of course, have made use of the telephone to get in communication with those who must now be called in, but I longed to get a breath of fresh air, and to escape into the very sunlight that poor Langhorne had apparently dreaded so deeply.

I had laid my hat down on the Davenport; now I picked it up and put it on the table. Then, crossing again to the chair—truly, as he had said, a death-chair—I stopped and placed my left hand upon the man's shoulder, while at the same time I grasped his right hand in an attempt to detach the glass from the cramped fingers.

As I did so, that part of what sat there in the chair, crumpled under my touch and fell away, like the sand falling through an hour-glass, and as I reeled back in unutterable dismay and horror, I saw the right sleeve flatten out limply upon the desk, while in place of the hand which held the graduate was a small heap of gray-black dust!

I closed my eyes. As I opened them again, I saw in the chair only a disordered pile of clothing, with a great deal more of the gray-black dust on the floor and the arms of the chair. Scattered about were little bunches of prematurely gray hair, and I knew, as I gazed, that *Randall Langhorne's last experiment had been crowned with success!*



The Man from Honolulu

BY LAWRENCE WILLIAM PEDROSE

A Honolulu swimmer is a society sensation by his remarkable feats in the water. Much is explained by an amazing discovery made in his bath room.



AP. CAVANAUGH gravely wagged a forefinger.

"I have," he stated, "aboard my yacht in the harbor, a man who can swim Elliot Bay."

He spoke quietly, but had a bomb-shell been exploded amidst the group on the Arctic Club veranda, it would not have caused a greater sensation. From every side came gasps of incredulity, and a dozen chairs loudly scraped the floor, as their owners turned to stare at the speaker.

It was the evening following Tums Cavil's unsuccessful attempt to swim Seattle's harbor, in which effort that world-famous athlete had lost his life. Cap. Cavanaugh had returned but that morning from a cruise of the Friendly Islands, and as he always brought back from such trips a fund of rare good stories, the boys at the club were wont to single him out and start him yarning. The talk had finally gotten round to the tragedy of the day before, and when it is remembered that many athletes had attempted the four-mile swim from Seattle to the downtown wharves, without one having accomplished the feat, it will be understood why everyone hung breathlessly on the words of a well-known man like Cap. Cavanaugh.

"Yes," he reiterated in the same even voice, "I have a man who can swim the harbor—in fact, he can cross it and return without pausing to rest. If that five-hundred dollar purse which was put up for Tums Cavil, the professional, still stands—and the man of whom I speak is only an amateur—I think I can persuade him to take the risk.

"He is a Hawaiian, and claims to be of royal blood. His name is Kah-mee—something; but we call him 'the Duke,' for short. I picked him up in Honolulu. He is well educated and very intelligent; but you know how it is with those brown men—nobody in the islands will give them employment entailing responsibility when whites can be had. I saw him do a few stunts in the surf and offered him a job as A. B., so he could get to the States. He jumped at the chance.

"Every evening, during the run up, he entertained us with stories. There was one in particular that I remember well, and, for a barefaced lie, it outdoes anything I ever before heard. The Duke, though, sticks to it and swears it is true, and he tells it with such evident sincerity that he almost convinces one.

"One night, a Cockney sailor told a tale of pelagic sealing with a Russian ship among the Aleutians, and when he had finished, the Duke be-

gan to question him about the seals.

"It is an established fact, you know, that the fur seal, or *otariidæ*, as it is known scientifically, because it has ears and belongs to the otter family, spends a greater part of the year in the warm waters near the Equator and makes the long migration into the Arctic for the breeding season.

"When the Duke mentioned this, the Cockney got sarcastic and wanted to know what a nigger knew about it; whereupon the Duke quietly replied that he knew seals better than any other living man, because he had been with them on one of their annual migrations into the north and lived with them for several months. At this the Cockney flared up and called the Duke 'a blyme liar,' so I sent him below to cool off. It was then the Duke told his weird story.

"He said that when he was a kid of four, he was lost overboard one night from one of those Hawaiian native boats during a gale off the islands. He outlived the storm (you know how those little brown kids can swim; it seems as though they are born for the water), and when morning came, found himself out of sight of land and in the midst of a herd of seals, one of which took a fancy to him and adopted him.

"The seals were on their way to the Arctic, but so gradual was the change in temperature of the water as they slowly forged north, that the kid never noticed it. He had had on no clothing to begin with, and Nature soon padded him out with blubber like the seals till he was as roly-poly as any of them. Also, he grew a coat of silky fur, which extended from his

neck to the tips of his toes.

"He says the first real discomfort he experienced was when the herd reached the ice-floes. It was a long time before he could accustom himself to sitting on the ice—"

At this point, an explosion of laughter greeted the narrator. He waited till it had subsided, then went on:

"The first month after the herd reached its breeding grounds, the bleak shores of the Aleutians, was a happy one for the kid. He had an abundance of food and all the baby seals for playmates. For hours at a stretch, he says, he used to take them in his arms and slide down the ice-hummocks, or disport with them in the water, playing games the like of which human beings never dreamed.

"Then came the fur hunters, sailing ships filled with big, black-bearded men, who drove the seals inland when they caught them sleeping on the shore or ice-fields and ruthlessly slaughtered them.

"The kid quickly learned to fear the hunters, and, because of his keener senses, became lookout for the herd, perching himself for hours at a time upon some ice-ridge and keeping watch out over the fog banks for the spars of the ships.

"He says he has a hazy recollection of a dark, gloomy day, when he was standing guard as usual, and the hunters slipped up on them in skin canoes under cover of the fog. Caught unawares, the herd bolted inland, the hunters pursuing with club and spear, and soon the ice for acres around was dyed red with the slaughter.

"Only a few of the seals escaped,

and the kid managed to get away with these; but they would have nothing more to do with him, no doubt blaming him for the slaughter of their companions, so he left them and struck off by himself. Alone, he wandered from island to island, meeting with many adventures and many times narrowly escaping the hunters, till he at last came upon another herd that would take him in.

"A few weeks later, when the seals returned to the waters of his home, the kid followed, there to be picked up by a tribe of his own people and adopted by the chief.

"As he grew up, his remarkable ability to handle himself in the water, even in that land of wonderful swimmers, won him fame; but when he reached manhood, he waned as an attraction and had to hunt for work. By being taken up by a college-bred Englishman—one of those wastrel remittancemen, you understand—he got an education, till today he is as choice in his use of English as a professor

"He is only twenty-three now, and as fine a specimen of manhood as I have ever seen. He's quite fair skinned, too, and would pass for a Frenchman or Spaniard any time. I'll bring him up tomorrow night and introduce him. He is every inch a gentleman, and I am sure you will like him."

Cap. Cavanaugh concealed a yawn, glanced at his watch, rose, and with a "good-night, all," sauntered into the club house.

For a long while, the group on the veranda stared at one another in awed silence, then:

"It's impossible!" exploded Patter-

son, the sporting-news editor of a morning newspaper, and everyone looked queerly at him. "A human being couldn't have had those adventures!"

"I don't know about that," put in Snelling, a friend of Cap. Cavanaugh's and a man whose word carried considerable weight around the club. "I know Cap. quite well, and I am sure that the tales he tells are pretty near true."

Most were inclined to view the story as a yarn of the baldest Munchausen type, but when the crowd broke up, half an hour later, all had resolved to be on hand the following evening and meet the Duke.

The Arctic Club has a very liberal-minded membership, made up, for the larger part, of business men about town, and it opened wide its arms to Cap. Cavanaugh's prodigy, Duke Kahmee.

The Duke proved to be a rather likable young fellow, well dressed, well mannered and not at all forward. Most of the Hawaiians I had ever seen were short, stocky-built fellows who closely resembled the negro type; but the Duke was more like a white man. He was tall—over six feet—slender, and had a pantherlike gracefulness of carriage that suggested great strength. He had thick black hair and clean-cut features, while his firm, yet sensually-thick lips, when parted, revealed two even rows of snow-white teeth.

I could find but one fault with him—that was a vanity of dress that he affected. So extremely high was the white collar he wore that it concealed

his whole neck, reaching to a point just below his ears; but so naturally did he wear it, that, under the spell of his personality, one was willing to forgive him it. I liked him from the start, and inside of an hour we had become friends.

I persuaded him to tell the story of his adventures among the seals, and he gave it almost word for word as had Cap. Cavanaugh. I must admit he was convincing. Even Patterson, who bore the nickname of "Old Unbelief," accepted it with the comment: "Highly improbable, but possible—yes, sir, possible."

Later we took the Duke down to the club natatorium and let him inspect the tank with a view to giving us an exhibition of his skill in the near future, little thinking that we would that very night see it demonstrated.

T. Henry Treat, a personal friend of Cap. Cavanaugh's, was standing on the slippery tiling at the deep-water end of the tank, explaining its construction to the Duke, who stood on the other side, when, turning to a swimming device which was swung to the rafters, his foot slipped, precipitating him into the water.

As the pool at that hour was closed to bathers, no attendants were on hand, and Treat, being unable to swim, sank. I cast round for a swimming belt, intending to jump in and help him, but suddenly the Duke shot past me, cleaved the air, and struck the water at the spot where Treat had last appeared.

Almost before the rest of us comprehended his move, he rose again, several yards out, supporting the form

of the now unconscious clubman.

It was an hour before Treat was able to walk without assistance. He departed for the Laurels, his palatial home out on the Sound, insisting upon the Duke's going along as his guest for a few days.

The Duke had changed into dry clothes which had been furnished by the club members, but—and it caused me to wonder at the time—he stubbornly refused to exchange his bedraggled collar for one of mine. I did not insist, knowing that he could have his own soon sent up from the yacht.

Before he left, though, he promised he would swim the harbor the following Sunday, rain or shine, and we all voted him a good sport.

As Sunday was but two days away, preparations for the exhibition were immediately begun. Patterson saw to it that the newspapers made much of the Duke, so when Sunday dawned, excitement throughout the city was rife.

Large crowds thronged the two sides of the harbor when the hour announced for the swim arrived. Cap. Cavanaugh's yacht, with the Duke aboard, steamed to the West Side, where Tums Cavil had made his fatal start; and along with a few of the boys from the club, I was fortunate enough to be aboard. Also, to add interest to the gathering, Treat had brought along his family, which included Ruth, his daughter, a girl of twenty, with whom I was on close terms.

With many pangs of jealousy—for I, too, was an ardent admirer of Ruth and had reasons to believe that my

suit was favored—I noticed an intimacy that had sprung up between her and the Duke during their short two-days' acquaintance. I could not believe that she would ever marry a brown man, but he was a fine fellow, and I was conscious of a vague uneasiness. I think I began harboring a feeling of antagonism toward him from that moment.

When he came on deck, the Duke presented a striking picture. Unlike other swimmers, he wore a black garment that reached from the tips of his toes to the top of his head, leaving only his face and hands uncovered. The upper part of the garment was a hood which he had drawn low over his forehead, and he appeared more like a character one would expect to see on the stage or at a fancy-dress ball than at a swimming exhibition. Truly he resembled a very imp of shadow as he stood poised on the bow of the yacht, slender, his body as symmetrically formed as a girl's.

He made but one stipulation: that no boats follow him. As the sky was fast becoming overcast with dark dark clouds, Cap. Cavanaugh and the press boats acquiesced with considerable reluctance. Then, with a wave of his hand and a nodding smile, the Duke took a header into the bay, cutting the water without a splash, and a moment later his black head appeared many rods out. Nor did he head out the Sound, as other swimmers had done, to make allowance for the incoming tide, but darted in a straight line for the crowded wharves across the harbor.

To add to his difficulty, when he

was a few hundred yards out, the squall that had been threatening, struck, and soon white-capped waves were sweeping the bay. Immediately the yacht put out to escort him, but he raised an arm and vigorously shook his head; and an instant later, even the spyglasses that had been trained on him constantly from the start, lost him among the waves.

Fifteen, thirty, forty-five minutes, an hour dragged slowly by, and the suspense was becoming unbearable, when suddenly a great screeching of whistles came from the tugs and other boats across the harbor.

The Duke had reached his goal!

Everyone aboard the yacht glanced at his watch, and a murmur of astonishment went up.

The Duke had done the four miles in the almost unbelievable time of seventy minutes!

Several men hastened ashore to telephone for verification, and they came back with the startling intelligence that the Duke already was far out on the return trip, having reported at the goal and left immediately after.

Ruth was the first to make him out as he approached. As he drew near, a rousing cheer went up. He was swimming strongly, and acknowledged the ovation with a playful dive, a wave of his hand and a broad grin.

To everyone's surprise, he refused assistance on reaching the yacht, springing lightly aboard, apparently not the least wearied. He hastened below to change into his clothes, and the yacht steamed back to her anchorage.

When the Duke again appeared on

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deck, Ruth took possession of him. She was radiant and showed such a marked personal interest in him that, to conceal my disgust, I took myself off to another part of the boat.

Of course the Duke was lionized for the rest of that week, and I was certain I detected a strut in his walk, which he did not have when he first came. Also, he assumed an attitude of confident proprietorship toward Ruth, and I avoided them as much as possible, to hide my growing antipathy for him.

At the end of the second week, there became rampant at the club, a rumor that Ruth and he were engaged and that the date for the wedding was to be set in the near future. Then, to cap the climax, as it were, the Treats invited me down for a few days, and the invitation was couched in such terms that I could not refuse.

When I reached the Laurels, I saw that the gossips had not erred; Ruth and the Duke were as devoted as a pair of doves. He trailed her round so closely that he gave me not one moment alone with her.

Several affairs, a dance, a picnic and a clam-bake, had been arranged, and I joined in the fun with a will, if without heart, and believed I concealed my feelings quite well. I was hurt deeply, but I said nothing of it.

The afternoon of my arrival, the Duke gave a private exhibition of his swimming and his performance was truly wonderful. As before, he wore the black suit with the hood, and when asked why, replied that he had found black to be the color best adapted to swimming, and that the hood held in

place his hair, which was long and heavy and would otherwise annoy him.

He went through a maze of intricate movements, performing with ease every feat I had ever heard of being done by swimmers before. With watch in hand, I timed one of his underwater swims, and I gasped with astonishment when he stayed under a full four minutes. It was marvelous, staggering to the imagination.

Out on the lawn that evening, he entertained us with stories. He was a born narrator, and when he talked, everyone within sound of his smooth, silky voice, felt the power of his personality and hung on his words in thrilled silence.

There was one tale he told that deeply impressed us all. It was about a superstitious belief current among the Islands that when a child is born on the water it oftentimes takes on the ways of a fish, sometimes even to the extreme of being deformed with webbed fingers and toes and like peculiarities. So strong is the native's faith in this tradition, the Duke declared, that, to appease the wrath of the God of Storms, they often return to the waves, a child born on them. He said he was positive he was born at sea, as he was so much at home in the water, and in conclusion laughingly raised his hands to show that he was "not webbed."

I could not stay near and see Ruth throw herself at this brown man, charming though I had to admit he was, so I strode down on to the beach to be alone with my thoughts, resolved to return to the city on the twelve-

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o'clock boat that very night.

It was eleven o'clock when I returned to the house. Everyone seemed to have retired, so I slipped round to the rear.

Owing to its having been built on the edge of a bluff overlooking the Sound, in the rear, the second story of the house was the ground floor, the veranda, which the library and several bedrooms faced, extending across the back.

I stepped into the library to get my bag and there found Treat waiting up for me. Without explaining why, I said I was going and he gripped my shoulder in such a fatherly manner that I gulped. I realized then that he understood how things were with me, and though he said nothing, I knew that he favored me rather than the Duke for a son-in-law. His hands were tied, however, for Ruth was a girl of strong will and used to having her own way.

He paused in the library door and followed me with gloomy eyes as, too overcome with my emotions to speak, I turned down the moonlit porch. I know I walked like a man in a trance, for I was stunned; all the joy seemed to have been blotted out of my life.

I had gotten half way to the steps, when a reflection of the moon in a window as I passed, suddenly broke in upon my reflections and made me pause. The curtain had fallen away from the window, and as I peered into the room, I recognized it as the bathroom of the Duke's suite.

Feeling guiltily like a peeping Tom, I was about to pass on, when my eye fell on the bathtub, which was close to the window.

I started violently.

The tub was plainly revealed, and I noticed that it was full of water. Peering closer, I saw myriad bubbles rising at one end, and, as one fascinated, I watched them.

Slowly, the outlines of a form in the water below revealed themselves. I caught my breath, and, for a moment, my heart stopped beating, while my hair rose on end. I shuddered.

In the tub, with all but his feet submerged, lay the Duke, and the toes that stuck up were covered with short, silky gray fur and joined to one another by a film-like skin similar to the webs of a duck's foot.

Drawn as by a magnet, my eyes followed the obscure lines of the body till they came to his neck. Then, suddenly, my knees went weak and, with eyes sticking out and jaw sagging, I leaned against the window and stared.

Both sides of the Duke's neck, from his collarbones to a point an inch below his ears, were opening and closing with the regularity of his breathing; and each time the muscles expanded, a thick, dark-red fringe appeared in each of the openings, while a large bubble and many smaller ones streamed from his lips and rose to the surface.

I understood then why the Duke was "so much at home in the water"—*he had gills like a fish!*

My bag fell from my nerveless fingers, and with a hand pressed to my throat in an endeavor to hold back the screech of laughter that struggled for expression, I turned, wide-eyed with terror, and staggered back to where Treat still leaned against the library door.

Jack in the Box

BY WILLARD E. HAWKINS

The Mystery of the Haunted Flat.

Did you ever fear being buried alive? Read the sensations—in an up to date flat.



JACK Willoughby and his wife had sensibly decided to do condensed house-keeping, until they could own their own home. They began looking for five room flats, perceived the extravagance of a spare sleeping room, and turned their search resolutely toward four room living quarters. Then the agent showed them a perfectly delightful three room apartment, and Jack snapped it up for fear their next visit would condemn him to life in one room and an annex.

It was a comfortable place. They had a pleasant living room, with a disappearing bed—one of those affairs that can be shoved out of sight under a closet during the day, so that you'd never know but what its headboard was the lower section of a real buffet. There was a tiny front porch, a kitchenette with a table arrangement, which you could fold up when you wanted to step out of the back door, a den, and a little tiled bath.

When they were alone, the Willoughbys ate from the folding table in the kitchen. If company came, they put the reading lamp on the piano and laid the cloth on the library table. And the disappearing bed made it unnecessary to invest in that article of furniture.

The agent who rented the apartment neglected to tell Willoughby that the flat was haunted. Perhaps he didn't know it. It had never entered Willoughby's head to inquire. From the earliest days there have been haunted castles and haunted houses; but whoever heard of a haunted flat?

For three months life had been going on very pleasantly with the Willoughbys. On the particular night to which this mass of predigested detail has been leading up, Willoughby retired as usual and slept his usual deep slumber. He was awakened by the doorbell, and has a faint recollection of kicking his wife out of bed to answer it.

He heard her moving around, falling over chairs and slipping into a kimona, then, having relieved his mind of responsibility, he dozed off again.

When next he woke up, the room was in pitch darkness. Turning his head from side to side, he tried to pierce the gloom to get his bearings. Willoughby's system was to look for the window over the piano on the east wall. From that he could figure out the general lay of the room, ending up with getting himself located head uppermost in bed.

To his surprise, he could not discover the window, though he turned his head from side to side. There was not even a ray of reflected light

to assist him.

Willoughby was a cool fellow, not easily disturbed. He knew that it was all right, and that when he became fully awake he would find himself twisted around staring at a blank wall or something of the sort. It wasn't until he tried to rise on one elbow that he became at all alarmed.

He was unable to move!

It was a fact. Except for a limited freedom which allowed him to turn his head from side to side, he was as utterly helpless as a stone image. He commenced to struggle frantically; but his efforts served only to make matters worse by convincing him that he was in a horrible pickle.

His first explanation was paralysis. Then he found he could wiggle his toes, cramp and uncramp his leg muscles, open and close his hands, and go through other restricted motions.

But when he attempted to rise, the weight of a hundred tons seemed to press him down. The fact was, he was lying in quarters so cramped that there was no room for his muscles to contract.

He thrust out one free hand exploringly and came into immediate proximity with the side wall of his prison. He lifted his head and his forehead struck against a hard surface with stunning violence.

Even in his panic-stricken condition, he abandoned the surmise that the ceiling had fallen. But how on earth did he get into this close box? Then it came to him.

He had awakened in his own coffin!

It is no reflection upon Willoughby's courage to say that he was ter-

rified. Of all terrors dreaded by men, the most awful is that of being buried alive.

He gave a sharp cry of anguish, but checked it upon the instant. The horror was magnified by the reverberating din that followed his vocal demonstration. After that, no matter to what lengths his terror threatened to carry him, he was careful to make no outcry.

Was he lying buried now, or had he only recently been placed in the coffin? He thought of the brave little woman who would be left alone in the world and was filled with regret at little thoughtless acts he had allowed himself to commit toward her. Then the consideration that he might not yet be underground brought with it hope.

If he could attract attention before being loaded in the hearse and taken to the cemetery, there was a possibility that he might be saved.

Heretofore he had not been aware of any sounds outside his coffin. Now he listened intently and was rewarded. Yes, deeply muffled, but perceptible, there came to his ears the sound of a thud. His senses translated it into the banging of a door a long distance away. Evidently he had not been taken away in the hearse.

As if in answer to his thought, there came a gentle heaving of the box. It was followed by a sound—or sensation—that could not be mistaken, the vibration of wheels against the hard pavement. It was the death-knell of hope. It meant that he was in the hearse and starting for the cemetery.

Little wonder that he fainted away.

No; Willoughby was not disintegrated by providential body snatchers. His experience was even stranger.

He awakened not to sit erect in his coffin, to view his grim companions in the medical dissecting room, but to find the sun streaming in on him through the window over the piano. He was lying in his own little flat, in his own little bed, and his own little wife was unconcernedly beating up muffins in the tiny kitchenette.

Dreamed it all! Perhaps. But Willoughby could not convince himself that the experience was a figment of nightmare. He felt as exhausted mentally as if he had actually gone through the nerve racking experience. Besides, the dream explanation could not account for the slight discoloration which he saw—or fancied—when he examined himself in the looking glass. The discoloration appeared at just the point of his forehead that had come in violent contact with the lid of the coffin.

Because he felt that it might frighten her, Willoughby did not mention the experience to his wife.

By the following day, he had regained his composure and except for a small lurking doubt, that refused to be entirely silenced, had accepted the only rational explanation—that it was a nightmare.

Until the latter part of the week nothing happened to bring this lurking doubt into the forefront. Willoughby was a sound sleeper, and his rest remained undisturbed until one night when he became conscious of the same vibration of wheels that had ended his former memory. Before he became fully awake, the vibration

stopped abruptly.

His attempt to move met with the same uncanny result as before. The cold perspiration came out all over his body with the gruesome knowledge of his situation. But his fear of being buried alive was not, at first, as great as on the former occasion. He had a half conviction that he would wake up in the morning and find it all an unreality, just as on the former occasion.

But an even greater apprehension, the fear of the supernatural, took the place of this terror. Then it came to him suddenly that this was the same experience, the true reality. There had been no real interruption; the supposed awakening and going about his daily affairs was a dream he had gone through as he lay in his coffin.

The more he considered this, the more reasonable it seemed. He had lost consciousness when the hearse commenced to bear him toward the cemetery. He had awakened just as the vehicle drew up at its destination. After all, he was to be buried alive.

Oh, for the welcome of another dream! He closed his eyes, forcing himself to lie motionless and calm. Presently a not unpleasant stupor—perhaps due to the close atmosphere—stole over him, bringing the slumber for which he had scarcely dared to hope.

And Willoughby awoke in the morning to find things just as usual in the tiny flat. To say that he was bewildered would be putting it mildly.

"Doc," he said, later in the same day, "I—I wish you'd look me over. There's something wrong—with my mind—I believe. I have hallucina-

tions—dreadful hallucinations.”

The physician regarded him gravely. “What sort of hallucinations?”

“Of—of being buried alive.”

After ten minutes of thumping and questioning, the advisor wrote him out a prescription.

“Doc,” said Willoughby, “are these pills for indigestion?”

“Why—er—to an extent their properties will assist your stomach in performing its work.”

“Thank you,” said Willoughby. When he regained the street, he tore the prescription to fragments and walked home thoughtfully. He had a plan of his own to settle all doubts of the reality of his strange experience. The device was simple. It consisted in tying a string around one of his fingers just before he went to bed.

He did not expect to make his test that night, but nevertheless the opportunity came. He woke up in pitch darkness with the same feeling of constriction as before. The tight coffin held him firmly entrapped.

He recalled the piece of string. He would settle all doubts as to the reality of his other life—the life in which he appeared to be free. With thumb and little finger he felt carefully of the middle digit.

The string, just as he had tied it, was there.

Now to prove to his daylight self that the coffin experience was likewise real.

He untied the string by a dexterous manipulation of the fingers of the same hand, then settled down with calm resignation to await the release which would come only with sleep.

The next morning, the finger that had worn the string was bare. For the first time, Jack Willoughby regarded his wife with the eye of suspicion. He did not know what he suspected her of doing, but the fact remained that she had been alone with him during the hours when his other life held sway.

“Marie,” he demanded, “did anything out of the ordinary occur in our flat last night?”

“Decidedly not,” she replied somewhat tartly. “The usual interruption. Mrs. Mack woke me up in order to call the doctor over our telephone. I’m sorry her husband is ill, but I do wish they’d install an instrument of their own. Three nights, almost hand running, are too many.”

Jack stared in perplexity. “Did she—come night before last, too?” he inquired.

“Yes, and talked interminably about people who lived in our flat before we came. The man died, and they buried him from our front room. He was subject to trances and twice narrowly escaped being buried alive. And, she declares, the place is haunted. Superstitious old thing!”

Willoughby rose. His cheeks were blanched.

“Oh, Jack!” exclaimed his wife in alarm. “Oh, you look ghastly!”

“It’s—nothing,” he reassured her. “I—I don’t feel well. I’ll see the doctor today.” He made his escape.

So this was the meaning of the terrible hallucination. Willoughby could not doubt that physis influence was at work in the room, causing any sensitive person who occupied it to experience the same terrible sensations

that had possessed another amid the same surroundings.

That night, he determined, should be his last in the flat, unless the ghastly experiences ceased. His hopes on this score were rudely dispelled when he awoke to find himself again in the fancied coffin. Yet the knowledge that the thing was a chimera—a mere projection upon his own consciousness of a mind long since dead, did not make it one whit easier to bear. He had learned by experience the one sure method of release. It consisted of lying perfectly still and allowing his mind to sink into dullness.

For a fourth time he sank into slumber and awakened as usual the next morning.

"Let's move!" he exclaimed wildly at the breakfast table. "Let's not stay another day in this flat."

His wife glanced at him wonderingly. "I was almost ready to propose it myself yesterday," she said, "but last night I told Mrs. Mack that we couldn't stand it to have our rest disturbed so much nights, and she promised to have a 'phone of her own installed. So I think everything will be all right now."

"H—m, yes. Has she been telephoning again?"

"Didn't you know? And she had on the most ridiculous looking—but of course—I forgot."

"Forgot what?"

"That you couldn't see what she wore, because you were out of sight. It is convenient to have a bed that rolls under cover; I merely have to push it back into the wall so that visitors won't get a view of you in dishabille. But she stays so long that I almost wonder you don't smother. You appear to sleep calmly through it all."

Willoughby was silent for several minutes. Presently he dropped his knife and fork, then strolled unobtrusively into the front room. He bent down and peered into the cavity beneath the clothes closet, into which the bed was rolled when not in use. He eyed the top and the sides of the chamber, noted how the former sloped up near the head to allow room for pillows, and he knelt to pick up a piece of string that lay just inside the opening.

His wife heard him walk slowly toward the street door.

"You aren't going to give up this lovely flat, are you, dear?" she called.

A long pause, then: "Not if you like it," he answered, and his voice was strangely subdued.



The Case of the Witch-Woman

BY HILDA MORRIS

We hesitated when we accepted this story—clever as it is—because it maligned a good friend of ours—a certain well-known black cat. But we stifled a natural family love to give you a remarkable fiction creation.



I AM a nurse in St. Margaret's Hospital, and my name is Ellen Graves. I am thirty-five years old, and I am,—or at least, I was, before the events which I am about to narrate took place,—a person of cheerful disposition, sound common sense, and few illusions. That I am so still, is doubtful. Few persons could witness the things which I have seen, without a resulting shock to the sense called "common," and a sharpening of those intuitions which perceive danger in commonplace surroundings.

The doctors generally gave me woman patients, and frequently of the neurasthenic type, as my personality is—or was—supposed to be calm and restful.

Early last fall, I was assigned to the case of a young woman, a school-teacher, who was suffering from a nervous breakdown. She was a pretty young thing, with great mournful brown eyes, and appealing ways, like a child. She was ill for a long time, and I became very fond of her. When she grew better, and her eyes could smile a little, we had happy chats together. We talked of books, and fancy-work, comparing our likes and dislikes. We

were particularly fond, as bread-winning women often are, of describing the kind of home we should like to have for our very own.

"I like a fireplace—a big one—a tea-table and the very newest magazines, piled up beside a deep chair," she pictured, like a little girl playing house.

"Yes, and a cat," I added. "I like a fireplace and a big, purry cat beside it."

Her eyes had been happy, but at the word "cat," they clouded over; a worried nervous frown drove the smile from her face.

"I had an awful dream last night," she confided. "That's what woke me up, you know. It was about a cat."

I did not want her to tell the dream if it had been unpleasant, and I moved hastily to put up the shade and speak of the sunshine, but she went on:

"I thought it was here, in this room, glaring at me, from the corner. It was a very big cat, a black one. It was just going to spring at me, when I woke up, all shivery, and you came in."

"Well, there isn't a cat within three blocks of this building, so you needn't worry. And how do you know that the cat was not going to rub against you and purr? Do you want milk-toast or custard for supper?"

I thought I had driven the ugly dream successfully away. We talked on for a while longer, and I told her some of the funny incidents that happen daily in a big hospital. When I left her for the night, she was cheerful again, yawning sleepily, and declaring that she intended making up whole weeks of sleep.

I spent the hour between eleven and twelve at the desk in the hospital corridor. I was on duty, and being very tired, I endeavored to keep myself awake by writing letters and forcing my mind to attention. In spite of this, I think I must have dropped off for a few minutes, pen in hand, for I have a recollection of being roused out of unconsciousness by the sound of a piercing shriek. It was not the cry of mere physical suffering, such as nurses become hardened to, but a shriek of fear—wild, unreasoning fear. I realized, after a breathless instant, that it came from the direction of the room occupied by the little school-teacher. As I sped down the long corridor, the sound was repeated once, and then there was silence.

I entered, and snapping on the light, found my patient rigid with terror, her wide gaze fixed on her hands, which she held stiffly before her face. It was some moments before I could rouse her, and a period of hysteria ensued, during which she cried repeatedly: "The cat. The black cat! It bit my wrists! Look, they are bleeding!"

I examined her wrists, and found not so much as a scratch on them. Yet she declared that they were bitten and bleeding, and seemed unable

to take her eyes from them. To quiet her, I bound them up, and giving her a sedative, sat with her until she slept.

The doctor believed the hallucination to be due to a slight relapse in her nervous condition, and I reproached myself for having allowed her to recall the ugly dream of the night previous.

Strangely enough, the patient declared that she had not been asleep when the apparition appeared. She said that an enormous black cat had appeared suddenly at her bedside, dim in the half-light, with glaring yellow eyes. She had cowered away into the far corner of her bed, when it sprang at her and attacked her wrists. She insisted that I search the premises and be sure that there was no cat about.

This I knew to be an absurd precaution. There never had been such an animal in the hospital, which was a large building set in a park that occupied a whole square. Vacant lots extended for two squares on two sides of it, the river bounded the third side, and a large public school building stood in the middle of the square on the fourth. To humor my patient, however, I made a search and inquiries, finding, as I had expected, that no cat had ever been seen in the hospital.

The young woman became quite cheerful by the afternoon of the next day, and the doctor decided that the frightful fancy had done no serious harm to her condition. I left her light burning low, and sat in the corridor near her door, occupying myself, as I had the night before, with writing letters.

The hours passed and all was quiet,

save for the muffled night sounds of a great hospital. Another nurse was to take my place at twelve, and when she arrived, I arose sleepily, intending to hurry off to bed for my brief hours of rest.

But before I reached the door, there was a cry, a heart-rending shriek of terror, such as had sounded from my patient's room on the night previous.

The other nurse stood rooted to the spot with fear. She was a brave, strong girl, fearless every day before death, but the scream filled her, as it did me, with unspeakable horror.

I dashed into the room to find my patient white and still, one wrist locked tightly about the other, as though to stanch a flow of blood. We revived her with difficulty. Her pulse was so low that I was frightened and sent for an *interne*.

He was much puzzled. Her condition, he said, had taken a decided turn for the worse. She appeared to be suffering from a sudden and most unaccountable anæmia, as if she had suffered a loss of blood. She insisted on keeping her hand locked about her wrist, declaring that it bled.

I bound it up tightly, to humor her, and she murmured something unintelligible about "the cat." We decided that it would be best to move her to another room, where the strange hallucination might not pursue. This was done, but she still felt afraid in the hospital, and after a few days, was taken away to the home of friends. Her recovery there was slow, I have heard, and the physicians were never able to exactly explain her condition.

The room which she had occupied, remained vacant for several days. When next it was assigned to a patient, I was again given the case. This time it was a woman of about my own age, a rather stout woman, who had always been in robust health, until a sudden attack of appendicitis laid her low. Her physical condition was splendid, her blood perfectly pure, and she had made rapid strides toward recovery from her operation. She was impatient to return home to her husband and children, and worried occasionally over the way things might be going on at home. Her two little girls came daily, with their nurse, and regaled her with stories of their school and play.

"The kitty's had a fit," the six-year-old announced one day in pleased interest. "She's better now, but she had a awful fit."

Mrs. Sturtevant showed the first sign of nervousness I had ever seen in her. She shivered slightly. "Don't speak of cats," she said, "I had a horrible dream of a cat last night. I want you to get rid of that kitten before I come home."

The conversation veered away from the subject, but I felt a distinct sense of apprehension. To make it worse, I did not know exactly of what I was afraid. I asked the nurse who was on hall duty to look in on my patient once or twice during the night, and I went off to bed.

But I could not sleep, which was unusual for me. As the hour neared twelve, I decided to get up and sit by the window, thinking that the moonlit view of the broad placid river nearby might quiet my nerves.

I had barely taken my place at the window when I heard it—Mrs. Sturtevant's scream. I suppose I had been waiting for it, without daring to acknowledge that fact to myself. I sped down the hall in dressing-gown and slippers, regardless of regulations. I found the other nurse, herself terrified, endeavouring to quiet Mrs. Sturtevant, who kept repeating, hysterically, "The cat! The cat!" Like the little school-teacher, she declared that her wrists had been attacked and were bleeding. She appeared to feel very weak. I bound up her wrists and stayed with her until morning.

The other nurse was in a very nervous condition. She declared that she had hurried to the room immediately upon hearing the scream, and that she had distinctly seen a large dark body disappearing through the window which led to the roof. She had leaned out to look after it, and was sure that it had re-entered the building through one of the windows of a charity ward, some distance away.

Nearly every one in the hospital had heard the shriek, and there were numerous inquiries as to its cause. It was decided to make a thorough search for the cat, and see whether a stop could not be put to these unfortunate occurrences. The fact that Mrs. Sturtevant had been lying awake when it appeared to her, made it seem probable that the animal really existed. A thorough search, however, failed to reveal any trace of the cat, nor could any person in the institution affirm that he had ever seen a cat there. The hospital authorities

were satisfied by noon of the day following, to let the matter drop. But Miss Banning, the other nurse, and I, decided to watch.

We said nothing more of the matter to Mrs. Sturtevant, but I assured her that I would be near her that night, and leaving the light burning, I succeeded in getting her to sleep. She slept, but neither Miss Banning nor I could do so. As midnight drew near and nothing occurred, we felt a trifle more easy, and I urged her off to bed.

"Wait until after twelve," she insisted. Even as she spoke, the clock chimed, and with it came Mrs. Sturtevant's shriek of terror. I have never heard anyone else scream as did the occupant of that room. We were standing near the door and entered in a second.

There on the bed, stood an enormous black cat, larger than any that I have ever seen. It had an indescribably evil appearance, its mouth hungry and snarling, eyes glowing like green coals, back arched and rigid, with stiff upright fur. For a half second we gazed, fascinated. Then, before we could stop it, the thing dashed through the window, and as I leaned out, I saw it clearly in the moonlight enter one of the windows of the charity ward.

Needless to say, another search was made. But nothing came of it. I think the hospital authorities came to regard us as slightly mad, though no one could deny that the fright of my patients had been real enough.

Mrs. Sturtevant, though terribly shaken up, was unhurt. She declared that the creature had sprung

at her wrists, and would have attacked them, had it not been frightened away. She refused to pass another night in the room, however, and as her condition was favorable, she was taken to her home.

I was decidedly averse to receiving another patient in that room. It was in a new section of the hospital, and there was a room next to it which had not yet been furnished. When I was assigned to another case in the first room, I begged leave to move the furniture into the room next door, which was of the same size and shape.

This case was that of a little girl who had broken her leg and collar-bone in a tom-boy attempt at tree-climbing. Her name was Susan, and she was the delightful, tanned, healthy kind of little girl that tom-boys usually are. She was very impatient and restless, and I had a hard time keeping her quiet. I read her story after story, and answered countless questions.

One day, after she had been there about a week, I sat reading to her from "Alice in Wonderland," and came to the part about the "Cheshire Cat."

"Ugh!" said Susan, "don't read that, please! I hate cats, and I dreamed about a horrid one last night."

I almost dropped the book in my perturbation at this remark. Then, not wishing her mind to dwell on the dream, I turned to another part of the book and we were soon laughing gaily over the "Royal Croquet." But as I read, a sudden suspicion entered my mind. Going to the window and leaning out under the pretense of

wanting air, I discovered two things which disturbed me very much. The room in which Susan lay, and the room which my former patients had occupied, were the only two rooms opening on to the roof which led to the charity ward. In one of the gray snow-patches which lingered on the roof, I saw distinctly the footprints of a cat.

I determined to make my own investigations before complaining to the hospital authorities again, as I had already got myself laughed at for my persistence in believing that a cat lurked about the hospital. It was not yet noon, and I had plenty of time to make a search before night, when, I felt sure, the thing was bound to appear again.

Going to the charity ward, I asked one of the nurses whether she had seen a cat, and told her what had occurred. She had laughed at us before, and was not inclined to take this seriously.

"I've not seen the cat," she assured me, "and I've got worries enough of my own. One of my patients has taken to sleep-walking, and has frightened the others half to death. They spoke of it some nights ago, but I never caught her at it until last night. And then, would you believe it, she was just climbing in the window. Goodness knows how long she'd been out on that roof, and if she had fallen off and killed herself, the blame would be mine."

This was exciting enough to make me forget, for a minute, my anxiety over the cat apparition.

"Who is the patient?" I asked with some curiosity.

"That old crone in the bed near the window. She's Italian. Lived in a hovel by the railroad tracks, and was injured by a train. She nearly bled to death. She really needed a blood infusion, but charity patients can't have that, unless they have devoted friends, and she has none, apparently. But she's been getting better lately. The doctors say it's quite wonderful. She'll probably leave before long."

The story was commonplace enough, surely. Yet something in it interested me. I walked over and looked at the old woman. Her black beady eyes stared at me without winking, her skin was like yellow parchment, her nose hooked as an eagle's beak, over a toothless mouth. She was a decidedly ugly old woman.

"She looks like a witch," I remarked, going back to the other nurse.

"Yes, with the evil eye," she agreed, and we both laughed.

I returned to the subject of the cat, and after securing a promise from the nurse that she would be doubly watchful that night, I went in search of Miss Banning.

We decided to watch together, by Susan's door. This time, however, we were determined that the animal should not escape us. Miss Banning had secured a promise from one of the internes that he would come up about twelve o'clock with his revolver. If the thing appeared, he was to shoot it.

I cannot begin to tell how long the hours seemed until twelve; though I had expected and dreaded the nocturnal visitor before, never had I experienced such a wild feeling of ap-

prehension as I did that night. Miss Banning, too, was affected. We started at every sound. When Susan called for a drink, I shook as though she had screamed. When the rubber-soled internes came down the hall, their noiseless tread seemed to my excited fancy like the padding of gigantic feline feet.

It drew near to twelve, and our ears were strained to catch the slightest sound from Susan's room. I tiptoed in and found her asleep, and coming out softly, I left the door ajar. It was only a minute later that I heard a soft sound, softer even than Miss Banning's whispered question. Creeping cautiously to the door, I saw it move. Even as I reached it, the latch clicked and I heard the key turn in the lock. Susan was alone with the thing.

Miss Banning fainted at Susan's scream. I think I should have done so too, had not the interne arrived just then, revolver in hand. Somehow, I managed to gasp out what had happened. We dashed into the empty room next door to Susan's, and through its window to the roof. All the time, we heard the child's cries, wild at first, then low and gasping. By the time that we reached her sill, they had ceased altogether.

There stood the cat. I could swear that its snarl was human. Its frightful mouth dripped blood, its eyes flashed fire. For one instant, it stood so, its devilish forepaws resting on Susan's white wrist. Then, as the doctor fired, it sprang. I felt it brush past me heavily. I can feel it yet. The bullet went home, for it gave a hoarse cry of anguish as it

thudded heavily from the roof. I fainted then, for the first time in my life.

The interne must have unlocked the door and called for aid, for when I became conscious, one of the nurses was bending over Susan, who lay moaning pitifully.

"Did he kill it?" I asked.

"Hush!" said the nurse. "Do get me some water."

I pulled myself together, as a nurse must, and went into the corridor for water. I had gone but a step, when the nurse from the charity ward came bounding down the hall with a frenzied look.

"She's gone!" she cried. "My old woman's gone! They saw her come out on the roof, but she isn't there. Did she come in your window?"

Who had turned the key in that lock?

It must have been my sixth sense that revealed the answer. I could only stare at her dumbly.

Dr. Andrews came back from the park below, and reported that the cat had not been killed, but had apparently made off for the river. It must have been badly injured, however, for a trail of blood lay on the snow for some little distance. Dr. Andrews had seen nothing of the old woman.

A thorough search revealed no trace of her. The river was dragged, but with no results. It was as if the earth had swallowed the old woman.

Susan, recovered from her fright,

and apparently suffering from the same strange weakness which had affected the little school-teacher, could tell us nothing. She had been awakened, she said, by the touch of the cat at her wrists. We told the child that the cat had been driven away and would trouble her no more, and indeed it did not. She soon forgot her horrible experience, and before long, recovered her perfect health.

Doctor Andrews was deputed the day after the occurrence, to go with others on a search in the neighborhood of the Italian woman's hovel. He told me the result of those inquiries, and I set them down here, with no word of comment. Who, in this modern world, could comment on a maze of facts that leads to only one horrible and preposterous conclusion?

The woman's hovel was unoccupied. Italian neighbors testified to that. They had never seen her since she was taken to the hospital. They knew nothing of her, except that she had been a witch and they had feared her.

One Guiseppe Romano volunteered to search the cabin with the gentlemen. The door, strangely enough, was ajar. There was but one room—a dark, filthy place, full of vile odors.

Guiseppe shivered and crossed himself.

"*Dios!*" he exclaimed, pointing.

In the center of the floor, stretched a huge black cat, dead.

It had been shot.



John Jones's Dollar

BY HARRY STEPHEN KEELER

A clever tale, the numerical results of which were computed by logarithms, is this story of a modest silver dollar deposited by a far-seeing old socialist, in the year 1914, to his fortieth descendant, who never was born.



IN the 201st day of the year 3214 A.D., the professor of history at the University of Terra, seated himself in front of the Visa-

phone and prepared to deliver the daily lecture to his class, the members of which resided in different portions of the earth.

The instrument before which he seated himself was very like a great window sash, on account of the fact that there were three or four hundred frosted glass squares visible. In a space at the center, not occupied by any of these glass squares, was a dark oblong area and a ledge holding a piece of chalk. And above this area was a huge brass cylinder toward which the professor directed his subsequent remarks.

In order to assure himself that it was time to press the button which would notify the members of the class in history to approach their local Visaphones, the professor withdrew from his vest pocket a small contrivance which he held to his ear. Upon moving a tiny switch attached to the instrument, a metallic voice, seeming to come from somewhere in space, repeated mechanically: "Fifteen o'clock and one minute—fifteen o'clock and one minute—fifteen

o'clock and one min——" Quickly, the professor replaced the instrument in his vest pocket and pressed a button at the side of the Visaphone.

As though in answer to the summons, the frosted glass squares began, one by one, to show the faces and shoulders of a peculiar type of young men; young men with great bulging foreheads, bald, toothless, and wearing immense horn spectacles. One square, however, still remained empty. On noticing this, a look of irritation passed over the professor's countenance.

But, upon seeing that every other glass square but this one was filled up, he commenced his talk.

"I am pleased, gentlemen, to see you all posted at your local Visaphones this afternoon. I have prepared my lecture today upon a subject which is, perhaps, of more economic interest than historical. Unlike the previous lectures, my talk will not confine itself to the happenings of a few years, but will gradually embrace the course of ten centuries, the ten centuries, in fact, which terminated three hundred years before the present date. My lecture will be an exposition of the effects of the John Jones Dollar, originally deposited in the dawn of civilization, or, to be more precise, in the year 1914—just thirteen hundred years ago. This John Jon——"

At this point in the professor's lecture, the frosted glass square which hitherto had shown no image, now filled up. Sternly he gazed at the head and shoulders that had just appeared.

"B262H72476Male, you are late to class again. What excuse have you to offer today?"

From the hollow cylinder emanated a shrill voice, while the lips of the picture on the glass square moved in unison with the words:

"Professor, you will perceive by consulting your class book, that I have recently taken up my residence near the North Pole. For some reason, wireless communication between the Central Energy Station and all points north of 89 degrees was cut off a while ago, on account of which fact I could not appear in the Visaphone. Hence—"

"Enough, sir," roared the professor. "Always ready with an excuse, B262H72476Male. I shall immediately investigate your tale."

From his coat pocket, the professor withdrew an instrument which, although supplied with an earpiece and a mouthpiece, had no wires whatever attached. Raising it to his lips he spoke:

"Hello. Central Energy Station, please." A pause ensued. "Central Energy Station? This is the professor of history at the University of Terra, speaking. One of my students informs me that the North Pole region was out of communication with the Visaphone System this morning. Is that statement true? I would—"

A voice, apparently from nowhere, spoke into the professor's ear. "Quite

true, Professor. A train of our ether waves accidentally fell into parallelism with a train of waves from the Venus Sub-station. By the most peculiar mischance, the two trains happened to be displaced, with reference to each other, one half of a wave length, with the unfortunate result that the nodal points of one coincided with the points of maximum amplitude of the other. Hence the two wave trains nullified each other and communication ceased for one hundred and eighty-five seconds—until the earth had revolved far enough to throw them out of parallelism."

"Ah! Thank you," replied the professor. He dropped his instrument into his coat pocket and gazed in the direction of the glass square whose image had so aroused his ire. "I apologize, B262H72476Male, for my suspicions as to your veracity—but I had in mind several former experiences." He shook a warning forefinger. "I will now resume my talk."

"A moment ago, gentlemen, I mentioned the John Jones Dollar. Some of you who have just enrolled with the class will undoubtedly say to yourselves: 'What is a John Jones? What is a Dollar?'"

"In the early days, before the present scientific registration of human beings was instituted by the National Eugenics Society, man went around under a crude multi-reduplicative system of nomenclature. Under this system there were actually more John Joneses than there are calories in a British Thermal Unit. But there was one John Jones, in particular, living in the twentieth century, to whom I shall refer in my lecture. Not much is

known of his personal life except that he was an ardent socialist—a bitter enemy, in fact, of the private ownership of wealth.

“Now as to the Dollar. At this day, when the Psycho-Erg, a combination of the Psych, the unit of esthetic satisfaction, and the Erg, the unit of mechanical energy, is recognized as the true unit of value, it seems difficult to believe that in the twentieth century and for more than ten centuries thereafter, the Dollar, a metallic circular disk, was being passed from hand to hand in exchange for the essentials of life.

“But, nevertheless, such was the case. Man exchanged his mental or physical energy for these Dollars. He then re-exchanged the Dollars for sustenance, raiment, pleasure, and operations for the removal of the vermiform appendix.

“A great many individuals, however, deposited their Dollars in a stronghold called a bank. These banks invested the Dollars in loans and commercial enterprises, with the result that, every time the earth traversed the solar ecliptic, the banks compelled each borrower to repay, or to acknowledge as due, the original loan, plus six one-hundredths of that loan. And to the depositor, the banks paid three one-hundredths of the deposited Dollars for the use of the disks. This was known as three percent, or bank interest.

“Now, the safety of Dollars, when deposited in banks, was not absolutely assured to the depositor. At times, the custodians of these Dollars were wont to appropriate them and proceed to portions of the earth, sparsely

inhabited and accessible with difficulty. And at other times, nomadic groups known as ‘yeggmen’ visited the banks, opened the vaults by force, and departed, carrying with them the contents.

“But to return to our subject. In the year 1914, one of these numerous John Joneses performed an apparently inconsequential action which caused the name of John Jones to go down forever in history. What did he do?

“He proceeded to one of these banks, known at that time as ‘The First National Bank of Chicago,’ and deposited there, one of these disks—a silver Dollar—to the credit of a certain individual. And this individual to whose credit the Dollar was deposited was no other person than the fortieth descendant of John Jones who stipulated in paper which was placed in the files of the bank, that the descendency was to take place along the oldest child of each of the generations which would constitute his posterity.

“The bank accepted the Dollar under that understanding, together with another condition imposed by this John Jones, namely, that the interest was to be compounded annually. That meant that the close of each year, the bank was to credit the account of John Jones’s fortieth descendant with three one-hundredths of the account as it stood at the beginning of the year.

“History tells us little more concerning this John Jones—only that he died in the year 1924, or ten years afterward, leaving several children.

“Now you gentlemen who are tak-

ing mathematics under Professor L127M72421Male, of the University of Mars, will remember that where any number such as X , in passing through a progressive cycle of change, grows at the end of that cycle by a proportion p , then the value of the original X , after n cycles, becomes $x(1+p)^n$.

"Obviously, in this case, X equalled one Dollar; p equalled three one-hundredths; and n will depend upon any number of years which we care to consider, following the date of deposit. By a simple calculation, those of you who are today mentally alert can check up the results that I shall set forth in my lecture.

"At the time that John Jones died, the amount in the First National Bank of Chicago to the credit of John Jones the fortieth, was as follows."

The professor seized the chalk and wrote rapidly upon the oblong space:

1924	10 years elapsed	\$1.34
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"The peculiar sinuous hieroglyphic," he explained, "is an ideograph representing the Dollar.

"Well, gentlemen, time went on as time will, until a hundred years had passed by. This First National Bank still existed, and the locality, Chicago, had become the largest center of population upon the earth. Through the investments that had taken place, and the yearly compounding of interest, the status of John Jones's deposit was now as follows." He wrote:

2014	100 years elapsed	\$19.10
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"In the following century, many minor changes, of course, took place in man's mode of living; but the so-called socialists still agitated wildly for the cessation of private owner-

ship of wealth; the First National Bank still accepted Dollars for safe keeping, and the John Jones Dollar still continued to grow. With about thirty-four generations yet to come, the account now stood:

2114	200 years elapsed	\$364.00
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"And by the end of the succeeding hundred years, it had grown to what constituted an appreciable bit of exchange value in those days—thus:

2214	300 years.	\$6920
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"Now the century which followed contains an important date. The date I am referring to is the year 2292 A.D., or the year in which every human being born upon the globe was registered under a numerical name at the central bureau of the National Eugenics Society. In our future lessons which will treat with that period in detail, I shall ask you to memorize that date.

"The socialists still agitated, fruitlessly, but the First National Bank of Chicago was now the first International Bank of the Earth. And how great had John Jones's Dollar grown? Let us examine the account, both on that important historical date, and also at the close of the 400th year since it was deposited. Look:

2292	378 years	\$68,900
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2314	400 years	\$132,000
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"But, gentlemen, it had not yet reached the point where it could be termed an unusually large accumulation of wealth. Far larger accumulations existed upon the earth. A descendant of a man once known as John D. Rockefeller possessed an accumulation of great size, but which, as a matter of fact, was rapidly dwindling as it passed from genera-

tion to generation. So, let us travel ahead another one hundred years. During this time, as we learn from our historical and political archives, the socialists began to die out, since they at last realized the utter futility of combating the balance of power. The account, though, now stood:

2414 500 years \$2,520,000

"It is hardly necessary for me to make any comment. Those of you who are most astute, and others of you who flunked my course before and are now taking it the second time, of course know what is coming.

"Now, the hundred years which ended with the year 2514 A.D., saw two events—one, very important and vital to mankind, and the other very interesting. I will explain.

"During the age in which this John Jones lived, there lived also a man, a so-called scientist called Metchnikoff. We know, from a study of our vast collection of Egyptian Papyri and Carnegie Library books, that this Metchnikoff promulgated the theory that old age—or rather senility—was caused by a colon-bacillus. This fact was later verified. But while he was correct in the etiology of senility, he was crudely primeval in the therapeutics of it.

"He proposed, gentlemen, to combat and kill this bacillus by utilizing the fermented lacteal fluid from a now extinct animal called the cow, models of which you can see at any time at the Solaris Museum."

A chorus of shrill, piping laughter emanated from the brass cylinder. The professor waited until the merriment had subsided and then continued:

"I beg of you, gentlemen, do not smile. This was merely one of the many similar quaint superstitions existing in that age.

"But a real scientist, Professor KI22B62411Male, again attacked the problem in the twenty-fifth century. Since the cow was now extinct, he could not waste his valuable time experimenting with fermented cow lacteal fluid. He discovered that the old γ rays of Radium—the rays which you physicists will remember are not deflected by a magnetic field—were really composed of two sets of rays, which he termed the δ rays and the ϵ rays. These last named rays—only when isolated—completely devitalized all colon-bacilli which lay in their path, without in the least affecting the integrity of any interposed organic cells. The great result, as many of you already know, was that the life of man was extended to nearly two hundred years. That, I state unequivocally, was a great century for the human race.

"But I spoke of another happening—one, perhaps, of more interest than importance. I referred to the account of John Jones the fortieth. It, gentlemen, had grown to such a prodigious sum that a special bank and board of directors had to be created in order to care for, and re-invest it. By scanning the following notation, you will perceive the truth of my statement:

2514 600 years \$47,900,000

"By the year 2614 A.D., two events of stupendous importance took place. There is scarcely a man in this class who has not heard of how Professor P222D29333Male accidentally

stumbled upon the scientific fact that the effect of gravity is reversed upon any body which vibrates perpendicularly to the plane of the ecliptic with a frequency which is an even multiple of the logarithm of two to the Napierian base 'e.' At once, special vibrating cars were constructed which carried mankind to all the planets. That discovery of Professor P222D29333 Male did nothing less than open up seven new territories to our inhabitants; namely: Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune. In the great land rush that ensued, thousands who were previously poor became rich.

"But, gentlemen, land, which so far had constituted one of the main sources of wealth, was shortly to become valuable for individual golf links only, as it is today, on account of another scientific discovery.

"This second discovery was in reality, not a discovery, but the perfection of a chemical process, the principles of which had been known for many centuries. I am alluding to the construction of the vast reducing factories, one upon each planet, to which the bodies of all persons who have died on their respective planets are at once shipped by Aerial Express. Since this process is used today, all of you understand the methods employed; how each body is reduced by heat to its component constituents: hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, carbon, calcium, phosphorus, and so forth; how these separated constituents are stored in special reservoirs together with the components from thousands of other corpses; how these elements are then synthetically combined into

food tablets for those of us who are yet alive—thus completing an endless chain from the dead to the living. Naturally then, agriculture and stock-raising ceased, since the food problem, with which man had coped from time immemorial, was solved. The two direct results were, first—that land lost the inflated values it had possessed when it was necessary for tillage, and second—that men were at last given enough leisure to enter the fields of science and art.

"And as to the John Jones Dollar, which now embraced countless industries and vast territory on the earth, it stood, in value:

2614	700 years	\$912,000,000
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"In truth, gentlemen, it now constituted the largest private fortune on the terrestrial globe. And in that year, 2614 A.D., there were thirteen generations yet to come, before John Jones the fortieth, would arrive.

"To continue. In the year 2714 A.D., an important political battle was concluded in the Solar System Senate and House of Representatives. I am referring to the great controversy as to whether the Earth's moon was a sufficient menace to interplanetary navigation to warrant its removal. The outcome of the wrangle was that the question was decided in the affirmative. Consequently—

"But I beg your pardon, young men. I occasionally lose sight of the fact that you are not so well informed upon historical matters as myself. Here I am, talking to you about the moon, totally forgetful that many of you are puzzled as to my meaning. I advise all of you who have not yet attended the Solaris Museum on Jupi-

ter, to take a trip there some Sunday afternoon. The Interplanetary Suburban Line runs trains every half hour on that day. You will find there a complete working model of the old satellite of the Earth, which, before it was destroyed, furnished this planet light at night through the crude medium of reflection.

"On account of this decision as to the inadvisability of allowing the moon to remain where it was, engineers commenced its removal in the year 2714. Piece by piece, it was chipped away and brought to the Earth in Interplanetary freight cars. These pieces were then propelled by Zoodolite explosive, in the direction of the Milky Way, with a velocity of 11,217 meters per second. This velocity, of course, gave each departing fragment exactly the amount of kinetic energy it required to enable it to overcome the backward pull of the Earth from here to infinity. I dare say those moon-hunks are going yet.

"At the start of the removal of the moon in 2714 A.D., the accumulated wealth of John Jones the fortieth, stood:

2714 800 years \$17,400,000,000

"Of course, with such a colossal sum at their command, the directors of the fund had made extensive investments on Mars and Venus.

By the end of the twenty-eighth century, or the year 2800 A.D., the moon had been completely hacked away and sent piecemeal into space, the job having required 86 years. I give, herewith, the result of John Jones's dollar, both at the date when the moon was completely removed, and also at the close of the 900th year

after its deposit:

2800 886 years \$219,000,000,000

2814 900 years \$332,000,000,000

"The meaning of those figures, gentlemen, as stated in simple language, was that the John Jones Dollar now comprised practically all the wealth on Earth, Mars, and Venus—with the exception of one university site on each planet, which was, of course, school property.

"And now I will ask you to advance with me to the year 2899 A.D. In this year the directors of the John Jones fund awoke to the fact that they were in a dreadful predicament. According to the agreement under which John Jones deposited his Dollar away back in the year 1914, interest was to be compounded annually at three per cent. In the year 2899 A.D., the thirty-ninth generation of John Jones was alive, being represented by a gentleman named J664M42721Male, who was thirty years of age and engaged to be married to a young lady named T246M42652Female.

"Doubtless, you will ask, what was the predicament in which the directors found themselves. Simply this:

"A careful appraisalment of the wealth on Neptune, Uranus, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, and Mercury, and likewise Earth, together with an accurate calculation of the remaining heat in the Sun and an appraisalment of that heat at a very decent valuation per calorie, demonstrated that the total wealth of the Solar System amounted to \$6,309,525,241,362,15.

"But, unfortunately, a simple computation showed that if Mr. J664M42721Male married Miss T246M42-

652Female, and was blessed by a child by the year 2914, which year marked the thousandth year since the deposit of the John Jones Dollar, then in that year there would be due the child, the following amount:

2914 1000 years \$6,310,000,000.00

"It simply showed beyond all possibility of argument, that by 2914 A.D., we would be \$474,758,637.85 shy—that we would be unable to meet the debt to John Jones the fortieth.

"I tell you, gentlemen, the board of directors were frantic. Such wild suggestions were put forth as the sending of an expeditionary force to the nearest star in order to capture some other Solar System and thus obtain more territory to make up the deficit. But that project was impossible on account of the number of years that it would have required.

"Visions of immense law suits disturbed the slumber of those unfortunate individuals who formed the John Jones Dollar Directorship. But on the brink of one of the biggest civil actions the courts have ever known, something occurred that altered everything."

The professor again withdrew the tiny instrument from his vest pocket, held it to his ear and adjusted the switch. A metallic voice rasped: "Fifteen o'clock and fifty-two minutes—fifteen o'clock and fifty-two minutes—fift——" He replaced the instrument and went on with his talk.

"I must hasten to the conclusion of my lecture, gentlemen, as I have an engagement with Professor C122B24-

999Male of the University of Saturn at sixteen o'clock. Now, let me see; I was discussing the big civil action that was hanging over the heads of the John Jones Dollar directors.

"Well, this Mr. J664M42721Male, the thirty-ninth descendant of the original John Jones, had a lover's quarrel with Miss T246M42652Female, which immediately destroyed the probability of their marriage. Neither gave in to the other. Neither ever married. And when Mr. J664M42721Male died, in 2940 A.D., of a broken heart, as it was claimed, he was single and childless.

"As a result, there was no one to turn the Solar System over to. Immediately, the Interplanetary Government stepped in and took possession of it. At that instant, of course, private property ceased. In the twinkling of an eye almost, we reached the true socialistic and democratic condition for which man had futilely hoped throughout the ages.

"That is all today, gentlemen. Class is dismissed."

One by one, the faces faded from the Visaphone.

For a moment, the professor stood ruminating.

"A wonderful man, that old socialist, John Jones the first," he said softly to himself, "a far-seeing man, a bright man, considering that he lived in such a dark era as the twentieth century. But how nearly his well contrived scheme went wrong. Suppose that that fortieth descendant had been born?"



Quilligan and the Magic Coin

BY HARRY STEPHEN KEELER



EUPHEMISTICAL-
LY speaking, Quil-
ligan was suffering
from the toxic ef-
fects of a common
grain derivative.

Mechanically speak-
ing, his condition was such that it re-
quired the expenditure of more than
the usual number of ergs to maintain
his center of gravity directly above
his point of support. Geometrically
speaking, he was travelling along the
path composed of a series of hori-
zontal curves, each of which was half-
way between a catenary and hypocy-
cloid.

For the ninety-ninth time, Quilli-
gan was drunk!

Possibly Arabian Nights adven-
tures happen only to those who are
drunk. Perhaps not. Very likely
there was nothing mysterious about
Quilligan's peculiar adventure with
the magic coin, considering its pro-
saic outcome. And, on the other
hand—

But, we reiterate, Quilligan was
drunk.

It was eight o'clock in the evening.
Since five that afternoon he had been
wandering aimlessly back and forth
through the mazes of the Loop, vainly
searching for one person. He had in-
quired in all-night drug stores and
fly-by-night auction houses; in ten
cent stores and salvation army soup
kitchens; in pawnshops and penny
arcades; in photo-postal studios and

chop-suey restaurants; from traffic
cops and blind beggars; from shoot-
ing galleries and home-scurrying shop
girls; from chauffeurs and newsboys;
from nickel show cashiers and street-
corner shoestring merchants; from—

But the only result so far achieved
had been the taking on of a cargo of
the aforesaid grain derivative, each
increment of which had drowned its
inciting rebuff.

With such a rigorous search as this
going on before our very eyes, it be-
hooves us to investigate it a little more
closely. Perhaps we can be of assist-
ance—and thus stem the flowing tide
of bitterness and booze that threatens
to engulf Quilligan.

The object of Quilligan's search, it
seems, was one August Heinze Shu-
tenthaler, a friend of his boyhood
days. Exactly forty-eight hours be-
fore, Quilligan received over the gen-
eral delivery of the postoffice at
Kokomo, Indiana, a postcard which
proved to be from Augustus Heinze
Shutenthaler himself. In it the latter
announced that in two days he was
opening up his new and glittering
palace of free lunch and fiery liquor,
bowing bartenders and bottled beer,
in Chicago's downtown district, and
that he hoped to see his boyhood
friend, Quilligan, there on the open-
ing night. In view of the fact that
the postal had eluded the argus-eyed
Mrs. Quilligan, Quilligan was in
Chicago ready to greet his old friend,
Augustus Heinze Shutenthaler. But

in view of the fact that he had forgotten to bring the postal carrying the address of the new and glittering palace of music boxes and matchless brew, brass railings and bottled rum, there was no Shutenthaler to greet—no Shutenthaler to find.

Earlier in the evening a sympathetic druggist had looked up the name of Shutenthaler in the city and telephone directories for Quilligan—and had found no entry whatever. So that trail, therefore, was nipped in the clue. Hence Quilligan was becoming discouraged. He longed to see Augustus Heinze Shutenthaler, with whom he used to paddle in the old swimming hole. He longed to see Augustus Heinze Shutenthaler's new and glittering establishment, and to imbibe a convivial glass with him. To return to Kokomo without seeing Shutenthaler would be no less than a—hic—crime.

For the ninety-ninth time, Quilligan perked up and approached a blue-coated traffic cop that loomed up in front of him from an alcoholic fog.

"'S this way, ossifer," he murmured. "'S m' fren' Shutenthaler. Shutenthaler—bran new s'loon—roun' here somew'ere." With a majestic sweep of his hand he indicated the whole 156 square miles of Chicago. "Here—somew'ere. Where'll I fin' Shutenthaler?"

"Now f'r th' third and last time," said the cop testily, "I'm tellin' ye it'll be roonin' ye in I will, do ye be troublin' me wid annymore quistions about y'r frind Shoohootenthaler. As I told ye wanst before, I know nahthing about anny Tootenshaler. If th' name's not in ather a 'phone di-

rectory 'r a city directory, thin I do be advisin' ye to consult a fortintiller—'r somethin' like that. Now be aff wid ye."

Sadly Quilligan turned away and resumed his wanderings along South State street. Always the same. No one knew anything about Shutenthaler and the new saloon. What a—hic—fool he had been for forgetting to bring that postal with Shutenthaler's location on it. What a shame to have to return to Kokomo without seeing the old friend of his boyhood days. The cop had advised him to consult a fortune teller. If he didn't get any better results than he had so far, he might consider the idea and—

He brought himself gradually to a position of oscillating quiescence. He stared. In front of him was the entrance of a rusty looking building, placarded all over with dentists' signs advertising gold fillings for fifty cents—and up. And, crowning all the tooth scenery, was a sign that held great potentialities for Quilligan. It announced that:

<p>MADAME ASTRO Revealer of the Hidden, Discloser of the Future, Crystal Gazer, Trance Medium, Is to be found in Room 202—Walk up.</p>
--

<p>Special for today: Crystal reading with trance: 50c.</p>

Swaying back and forth like an inverted pendulum, Quilligan read the sign from beginning to end. Then he dipped his hand into his trousers pocket and brought up all that he

found there: two ten dollar bills, a silver fifty-cent piece, and a return ticket to Kokomo. So far, so good, With punctiliousness he returned the two tens and the ticket to Kokomo. And with the fifty cent piece clasped in his fist, he ascended a long flight of creaky, wooden stairs to a land of false teeth and gold fillings.

May heaven guard Quilligan and those two ten dollar bills in his mad journey through the jungles infested by the tooth vultures. If he ever knocks at the wrong door he'll come out minus the two tens and plus a diagnosis of nothing less than pyorrhea alveolaris. Ah—even heaven must be on the job, for he stops in front of Room 202. He knocks. Once more we draw a long breath, and pause while the story slides ahead out of the present tense.

A long delay followed Quilligan's knock. If he had been able to see through a wooden door panel he might have observed a huge, florid woman hastily hiding an ice-cold bottle of beer beneath a stand which carried a long black cloth and a great crystal ball. At the same time he would have seen her scrambling into a somber robe covered here and there with white crescent moons. But finally the door opened.

"Lookin' f'r a Madame Astro," said Quilligan, bowing through a small and safe angle.

She bowed in return.

"I am Madame Astro," she replied in clear, grave tones.

"'S m' fren' Shutenthaler," he explained concisely. "Can't locate Shutenthaler. Augustus Heinze Shutenthaler. Been ever'wher.' Thought

I'd—hic—try fortune teller. Last resort, you know."

"Be seated," she commanded, beckoning him to a chair which stood in front of the crystal sphere. He dropped into it. Whereupon she closed the door and seated herself opposite him.

"Already I perceive that you wish the hidden revealed. I, Madame Astro, seer into the far, student of occultism, unveiler of the mysteries of the Orient, stand ready to help you. Speak, layman, speak—and—er—cross my palm with the sum of fifty cents. What wouldst know?"

Quilligan dropped the half dollar at the side of the crystal ball. Madame promptly performed the vanishing trick with it.

"'S m' fren' Augustus Heinze Shutenthaler," he elucidated. "Started new s'loon downtown. Jus' wan' fin' Shutenthaler. Thaz all. Thaz all."

Madame nodded understandingly and sympathetically. Madame realized that here was a victim, who, properly handled, was good for a double or even a triple fee. She commenced staring fixedly at the crystal ball. After a full minute had passed she began to sway gently from side to side. The swaying became more violent and then subsided, leaving her sitting stiff and rigid, her eyes glued mechanically to the transparent object in front of her.

Quilligan, rapt, watched her every movement.

Suddenly she leaned forward a trifle and commenced speaking in a dull monotone.

"I see—I see—I see—a—a—man. He is tall—and thin. He is clad in a

checked suit. He is seeking vainly for—for—for—something. Ah!—what that is—I cannot see. He asks everyone. They shake their heads. He stops. He appears discouraged. He stoops. He picks—picks up—picks up—ah, nothing less than the magic coin—the all-powerful coin of the four wishes. Ah, fortunate, fortunate mortal, to hold in his possession the magic coin itself. Does he know that four wishes shall that coin give to its owner before it loses its potency? Four wishes! Wishes for health, for fame, for riches, for love, for knowledge, for what not else. Does he realize that he holds in his hand a coin that a king's ransom could not buy? (Either that bottle of beer has gone to Madam's head—or else she's spreading herself.) Four wishes! Wishes to be used wisely. Wishes to be used foolishly. Ah, fortunate, fortunate mortal. But will he remember—will he remember the number 4? The magic number 4? Will he remember? Will he—"

Quilligan reached over and gently tapped Madame on the shoulder.

"All ver' nize—majick coin—four wizzes," he said thickly. "But how 'bout m' fren' Shutenthaler?"

Like a flash she relaxed. Her eyes opened wide. She stared stupidly about her.

"Idiot," she exclaimed, "you broke my trance. You snapped the most wonderful uninterrupted chain of vision I've had for a week. I could have told you everything you desired to know. As it is, it'll cost you another fifty cents."

Quilligan rose and pushed back his chair to the wall.

In Madame's second demand for cash he detected the faint creakings of a follow-up system. She was like all the rest. No one could tell him the answer to his problem: Where was Shutenthaler located? Without a word he walked to the door, opened it, and made his way down the squeaky stairs to the street. As for Madame Astro, however, she merely doffed her black robe, deposited her fifty cents in the Woman's National Lisle Bank, and resumed her bottle of cold beer.

Quilligan proceeded gloomily down the street. The clock on the corner of Van Buren and State showed the time to be 8:30 in the evening. Undecidedly, he paused, figuring whom to ask next. As he swayed to and fro in the breeze from the lake, the glint of something shiny met his eye. With infinite patience he stooped and picked it up. The light from the show-window of a nearby clothing store fell full upon it. A brief inspection showed him that his unsteady fingers held a bright metal disk on which the words were stamped:



Odd that, Quilligan ruminated. The crystal gazer; her vision of a tall, thin man in a checked suit picking up a

magic coin, her fatidical warning—"Remember the number 4"; her statement that the coin held exactly four wishes for its owner and then became valueless!

He scratched his head.

After which he clutched the metal disk in his hand and continued along the street, still picturing Madame Astro staring into the crystal sphere. All bunk, of course, he reflected. No such thing as a magic coin. No such thing as four wishes coming to a man in the 20th century. And yet—Well, he'd take a try at it.

"Lez see—lez see," he mumbled gravely to himself. "I wizz zat—zat—someone would—hic—walk up t' me and thrust a nize fat purse in my hand. Nize fat one. Nize fat one. Greenbacks—sparklers. Nize big one."

Scarcely had he covered thirty feet than a tall, thin young man with sandy complexion and a pair of steely blue eyes, stepped up behind him and apologetically tapped him on the shoulder.

"Beg pardon," he observed smoothly, "but—er—you must have dropped your purse. I came near holding on to it because of the hard times, but I've always—er—tried to be honest—so I want to hand it back."

Quilligan wheeled sharply. With amazement he looked down at the slim young man. His eyes travelled to the latter's out-stretched hand. Then they bulged out, for the hand was tendering him a fat leather purse, open just barely enough to disclose a bulky roll and a string of sparkling brilliants.

Only for a second did Quilligan hesitate. Then his own hand shot down

into his trousers pocket and immediately reappeared, the fingers holding one of the two ten dollar bills. With the other he reached out for the purse.

"You're the—hic—honestest man in the city," he affirmed genially. "Don't see how I ever losht it. Ver' honest man, m' fren'!" He pressed the crisp ten into the slim young man's palm. The latter clutched it eagerly. "There's reward—small, triffin' reward—f' ver' honest young man." He jammed the bulging purse into his coat pocket and hurried around the corner.

As soon as he reached an alley he turned and made his way down it for a space of ten or twelve feet to a point directly beneath a hissing arc-lamp. Then he withdrew the purse and prepared to count the contents. But, to his dumfounding, he found only a tight roll of narrow slips of green crepe paper—and a string of cut glass beads.

"Beau'fully, beau'fully stung," he murmured, after the explanation had gradually sifted in on him. "Stung beau'fully. Ol' game—and caught Quilligan from Kokomo al' ri'. Well, got my wizz anyway—nize fat wurse—but cosht me \$10. That a majick coin, all ri', all ri'. Jus' goin' t' watch that coin."

He threw the purse and its contents in a dark corner of the alley; then he returned to the street.

He covered another block. By degrees he began to forget about the magic coin and to ponder once more about the question that had engrossed him all the evening: How and where was he going to find Shutenthaler?

Finally he stopped. The fact had dawned on him that it was high time to buy another drink—for there was still \$10 left in the bank roll. But as he reached a decision in the matter, he caught sight of a big black negro, leaning nonchalantly against a doorway close by. Since the latter appealed to him as a possible source of information, he stepped over to him.

"'S m' fren' Shutenthaler," he explained. "Fren' Shutenthaler—"

"Shoot a dollah, sah?" interrupted the negro. "Yessuh." He peered carefully up and down South State street. Then he leaned over and whispered in Quilligan's ear: "Go straight to the fo'th flo' an' rap fo' times on the fo'th do'. Jes' remembah the numbah fo', sah."

Quilligan began the long, wearisome climb. Evidently he was on the trail of Shutenthaler at last. In turn he came to the second, the third, and finally the fourth and top floor. There he paused and counted the doors from the top of the stairway: one, two, three, four. He went down the hallway and rapped exactly four times on the fourth door. Instantly it swung open as if operated by an invisible genie. And as he walked in, it closed noiselessly behind him.

He peered around, discovered that he was in an immense room. At the rear of it was a long, green baize table, presided over by a black mustached man. Around the edges twenty or thirty men were crowded, some sitting and some standing, but all watching intently the spinning of a roulette wheel. With a sinking heart Quilligan realized that the wires of fate had crossed once more—and that

he was as far as ever from the trail which led to Augustus Heinze Shutenthaler.

As he stood there irresolutely, his attention was riveted by one of the spectators at the green baize table raking in a handful of silver and paper money. That was interesting. So he stepped over, wedged himself in the spellbound audience, and began to watch the ceaseless play on the black and the red, the odd and the even, the high and the low. Soon he caught sight of the great square which was painted on the green cloth and divided into thirty-six smaller squares, each of which was numbered with one of the numbers on the roulette wheel. He turned to a man at his side.

"Whaz nummers for?" he asked.

"Sh-h-h," whispered his companion. "Go easy, pal, on th' gab. They're runnin' under cover here. It's this way, friend. You lay your mazuma on any number. If that number comes up on the next spin of the wheel, you get 36 times your stake."

With an effort Quilligan steadied himself, for he suddenly remembered the magic coin in his pocket—the coin with three more unused wishes. And he recollected at the same time that his total wealth was reduced to a lone \$10 bill and a return ticket to Kokomo. Since his mission to Chicago had failed, here was a heaven-sent opportunity to go back to Kokomo with a roll big enough to choke the postmaster's mare. So he turned to the man at his side once more.

"'F I—hic—put \$10 on the number—any nummer—" He paused. More and more he began to see that

he had nothing less than a half-Nelson on the Blind Goddess, for he possessed three A. No. 1 wishes as well as the red-hot hunch: Remember the number 4. " 'F I put \$10 on th' nummer 4—an' th' nummer 4 comes up—do I get \$360, fren'?"

"Righto, pal," said the man addressed, watching with unconcealed admiration an individual who, drunk or sober, contemplated risking a ten spot on a 36 to 1 chance. "It's 36 times your stake on a number bet."

Majestically Quilligan reached down into his pocket. He gave the magic coin an admonitory pat. Then he drew up his last \$10 bill. A number of the players were depositing their stakes on the colored squares. Quilligan leaned over and placed his piece of paper money on the square marked "4."

"I wizz," he said sternly, to no one in particular, "that the number 4 comes up."

The black mustached man looked around. All the bets were placed. So he gave the disk an energetic twirl. It spun swiftly, the black and red merging instantly into a hybrid color, and the ivory ball giving a sharp rattling noise like a machine gun on the banks of the Yser. The wheel ran with undiminished speed for a quarter of a minute. Then it began to slow down. Quilligan looked on fascinated, steadying himself on the shoulder of his companion. Still slower it turned. The ivory ball now began to bounce several spaces at a time. Slower and slower the wheel revolved. And finally, with a last saucy leap, the marble dropped squarely into the slot marked "4."

"Well, by Hectofer," said the black mustached man, smiling gamely. "Stranger, you win. The first number bet placed tonight. Gentlemen, didja ever see the beat of it for sheer—" Crash!

An axe blade shivered the panels of the door. The shrill sound of police whistles and men cursing began in the outside hallway. Instantly confusion reigned supreme inside the room. The black mustached man sprang to the electric switch and snapped it. In a trice the room was plunged into utter darkness. Blow after blow continued to smash in the door. Amid the sounds of splintering wood and falling plaster, some excited person tipped over the roulette table. Men shoved, fought, struck out, kicked and tripped over each other in their wild efforts to elude the gambling squad that was breaking in the doors.

"Quilligan, entangled in a mass of cursing, stumbling figures, found himself pushed and shoved through a small doorway. At once he felt a cool draught of air on his face. A second later he discovered that he was on a gravelled roof in company with twenty or more fleeing men. He saw his companions speed across the roof in the moonlight and disappear down a rusty iron fire-escape. So he followed, panting and sweating, because he was the last man. He descended hurriedly, swaying dizzily at every rung; but he clung on like a fly until he reached a dark alley. Here he threaded his way through a number of barrels and packing boxes, and finally came out on the brilliantly lighted thoroughfare. Five or six doorways down, he caught sight of a blue patrol

wagon backed up to the sidewalk, and a big crowd lined up from the curb to the building line.

He walked hastily in the other direction and soon found himself a block away from the scene of the excitement. Whereupon he leaned up against an arc-lamp post and made an effort to collect his fuddled wits.

At once he remembered that he hadn't had time even to collect his \$360 winnings on his \$10 bet. So he ruefully thrust his hand down into his pocket and drew up the magic coin.

"Y'r some majick coin, all ri', all ri'," he groaned. "Got m' firsh wizz—an' cosh me \$10. Got m' shecond wizz—an' losh \$10 more. Now I'm broke entir'ly." He paused, frowning

at the coin. "Y're a big fake. Thought sho all th' time. Jus' a big fake, thaz all. I wizz I had jus' price of a drink—an' wizz I knew where I could fin' m' fren' 'Gustus Heinze Shutenthaler."

He flipped the metal disk idly over on his palm. Its reverse side read:



Beyond the Pyramids

BY FLORENCE BRINEY REED



F Allen Maxwell had not stopped inside the doorway of the little gift shop to avoid the sudden downpour of rain that March day, it might not have happened—but no—it was, of course, all ordained by fate—even to the precise moment of the sudden shower. 'Twas a quaint little place—the gift shop—crowded between great buildings on the busy street. Glass cases filled with jewelry in antique settings—curios—and bits of pottery were upon the shelves; Indian baskets filled the corners—and a portiere of shells and sea-weed pods divided a small alcove where the gentle faced proprietress sat beside a Russian Samovar, drinking a cup of tea, with a white kitten taking liberties with her crochet cotton. She arose at Allen's entrance and came out to the front of the store questioningly. Allen glanced about in search of something which he might purchase as the price of his shelter, but could see nothing.

"I can not see just what I want—was hunting," he said, to cover his confusion—and peering interestedly at the shelves.

"Was it—perhaps," suggested the lady, "a gift for a friend."

"Oh no" he said hastily. "It was a—a dish—something for my cigar ashes—don't you know. It is not easy to find the exact thing" he went

on, conscious that he was talking nonsense, but it seemed equally absurd to face the quiet, gentle lady with the simple truth that he had dodged within her door because of the fear of getting a new spring suit wet; so he looked with interest upon the little bowls of pottery and delft which she placed before him, as though the purchase of an ash receiver were as important as house.

"No, these are too—too light. I'd like something that might serve as a weight for my paper also."

"Oh," said the lady, going to a case in the far corner, "here is just the thing, I am sure" and she placed before him a little bronze figure. "It is unique. See—and you will not find another like it."

Allen examined it. A shallow bowl, about three inches long, was upheld by four tiny Sphinx. Back of it on a narrow slab of bronze was a kneeling figure of a woman in Egyptian dress with a straight instrument at her side. The figure was in profile—and most complete in detail, even to the tiny scarab which fastened her flowing robes. A unique head dress covered her head, and her hands were slim and graceful.

"Is it an antique?" asked Allen, who rather fancied odd ornaments.

"I do not know, sir—I can tell you nothing about it. However, I hardly think so. The price is not enough for a real antique."

"I'll take it" said Allen, seeing

through the window that the rain was ceasing and the sun struggling out.

"Three dollars. That is too cheap for a real antique," and placing the little figure in a pocket of the light coat he had been so reluctant to get rain spotted, he passed out. He did not think of it again until evening. The threatening clouds which had hung over the city all day had joined together in a black pall, from which the rain came down steadily, persistently, as though determined to make up for the uncertain showers of the day by a good downpour.

Allen came from his club, where he had dined, beneath a borrowed umbrella, and as he entered his room in the bachelor's apartments he flung off his coat with the determination to remain in doors for the rest of the night. A bright fire was burning on the open hearth and he made himself comfortable in dressing gown and slippers and drew up his favorite easy chair within the circle of warmth and light. The cigar box at his elbow on the table recalled his purchase of the afternoon and he drew forth the piece of bronze from his coat pocket and unwrapped it.

"There, Miss Lady," he remarked, setting it on the table before him, "the next time I shall bring an umbrella. 'Twill be cheaper and not so heavy to carry. See that you serve me well."

As he smoked his cigar comfortably, he lay back easily and scrutinized the little dark figure.

"Not a bad little curio—after all" he thought. "Wonder if it is real bronze! It's heavy enough. Might be incense burner—don't believe

they'd spend so much time on just an ordinary ornament—'t isn't like a common ash receiver—but—'t will serve."

The lamp on the table burned dimly through a shade of heavy green. Allen was far too comfortable to think of reading, but he reached out lazily and opened a drawer at the side.

"Let's see if I haven't a pastile here—one of those things I bought at that Bazar. Confound it! I seem to have bought a lot of foolish things lately. Ah, here we are—Egyptian pastiles. Just the thing for you, young lady! Here now! I'll christen you with a cloud of incense—fifty cents per box—and may you prove a good Goddess—and we'll live happy ever after."

Smiling at his foolish conceit and words he touched a match to one of the long brownish paper rolls—and as the smoke began to curl up around the feet of the kneeling figure he stretched himself back in the chair. Presently he felt a distinct shock and thrill as though some one had touched him. The smoke from the burning pastile hung like a thick cloud between him and the light. A strange pungent fragrance like burning sandal wood filled the air, and he fancied he heard a sigh. Out of the cloud of smoke appeared a face—a strange, beautiful face—with scarlet lips—long dark eyes—and bands of black hair arranged in a curious fashion—a small, shapely hand brushed the smoke away, and there kneeling before him was the figure of a slender girl dressed in flowing white draperies—in short, a living replica

of the bronze figure. She knelt at his feet—her profile outlined against the glow of the fire like an antique head on a coin.

Allen started in surprise. He felt dazed and wondered if he slept and dreamed. But no, one did not dream of scents or feel the glow of a fancied fire. The air was heavy with the strange perfume and the firelight felt still warm to his slippered feet. His cigar was still burning, and assured that he was awake, he spoke aloud:

"This is queer, very queer. How did she get here?"

At the sound of his voice the girl turned her face toward him. Her eyes looked into his, and he felt a growing sense of her beauty, though conscious that it was not of the type which he was accustomed to see. To his surprise, she answered him in a low, clear voice, that seemed to him strangely familiar.

"I came" said she, "because you called me."

"I called you!" said Allen, more amazed. "Say, am I dreaming or not?"

"For many years we have slept and dreamed" she answered. "Strange dreams have come to both of us—many a sleeping and forgetting. But now, at last, we are together."

"We certainly are that" said Allen, "but how it happened I don't know. Excuse me if I seem a little inhospitable, but this is a little beyond me."

"Soon you will remember" she said, rising and moving forward with slow grace. As she came nearer, Allen unconsciously leaned forward with outstretched arms as though to touch

her and know her reality, but just as he leaned forward as though to place her hand in his, he felt again that strange shock and realized he was alone.

His first glance was toward the bronze piece. A few spirals of pale blue smoke were curling up from the bronze bowl and on the floor beside it lay his cigar where it had dropped from his hand, burning a hole in the leather table cover.

"What a queer dream" he said. "Burnt leather and pastiles together got into my brain. But that dream girl was a lovely creature. Too bad I woke up so soon. Me for bed. She may come back."

But there were no more dreams that night, nor for several nights. Allen, as a popular young man of the wealthy younger set, was busy with social entertainments until one night he was left with a free evening. Again he fell asleep, or dreamed before the fire, and again she came. This time there seemed nothing unnatural about it, and he found himself talking to her of things of which he could not possibly have had any knowledge, of long marches across deserts, of a fountain beneath palms in strange lands, and she passed cool fingers across his forehead commiserating him upon the hard toil. This, since Allen's only toil was to sit up at director's meetings, seemed when he awoke the veriest nonsense, but pleasant, none the less.

Once she laid her soft red lips gently against his hand and murmured that the cruel stone had broken his fingers, but that some day they would be graced by the king's ring. Again

and again, he would have these strange dreams; until he became reconciled to the strangeness of it, and while conscious that it would seem like non-existence if repeated, nevertheless, felt a strange sense of the reality of the girl. Sometimes they would be hurrying across vast wastes of sand, fleeing from some unknown terrors. Again they would rest in the shadow of a great wall, and his eyes would sting as he watched the hot sun burning white on the sand beyond them. Then there were fantastic pictures of a quiet moonlight silvered river and waving palms. And always the girl was there—the girl with the mystic eyes and the haunting smile.

One day when a young man of decidedly Hebrew aspect entered his office and presented a card announcing himself to be a dealer in scarabs and other curios, he did not get rid of him at once, but talked and ended by making an engagement to visit his rooms at a down town hotel.

"It is not me that has the curios" his visitor explained, "but a great uncle—very old. He came from London to see America, and I travel with him and in every city where we stop, we sell—few—just a little—so tonight you see."

In the ordinary little hotel Allen found a man, very old, with long white beard and yellow skin, with piercing eyes and hooked nose. The contents of a battered suit case were spread before him. He looked without much interest.

"Where are your scarabs?" he questioned.

The old man unlocked a sandal

and took without uttering a word.

"These are very fine—rare" said the young man volubly. "Some of these taken from mummies—royal mummies by my uncle himself."

"Is that so?" inquired Allen good naturedly.

"It is so" said the old man. "Many strange things are so—if we but believe them."

Again Allen felt that strange touch of the mysterious. He picked up a ring at random and slipped it on his finger.

"Wish I knew the story of these things—this for instance." The old man leaned forward, peering at it and then started.

"That," he said slowly, "has a history black like itself. It is a ring of mourning—of death."

Allen gazed at it. The other stones were all greenish gray, or dirty white. This one was black like dull jet. The design was odd—the figure of a beetle—as were all the rest, but encircled with a serpent, which bound about its wings. The setting was gold.

"Here are more in any price," said the young man. "See Mister, this fine lucky set."

"This is the one I'll take, if I take any" said Allen determinedly. The two strangers exchanged glances and the older man lifted his hands piously; "Be it so—they are all for sale—you have chosen."

The young man still endeavored to change his customer's choice but to no avail.

"Here's the money" said Allen. "Twenty-five dollars you say? Not too much, if it's the real thing. Now, for its history."

"That you will have to learn for yourself" said the old man. "Of the black scarab nothing is spoken—strange tales were whispered of it, over there beyond the sands. I was but a boy when I first saw it. But Mister, this much I may say, there are of this kind only two in all the world, this which is now yours, and another."

"And where is that other one?" inquired Allen.

"Alas! I know not—but may good fortune follow you—and I will give you this lucky talisman," pressing into Allen's hand a cheap little pin from which dangled seven colored stones or bits of glass. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, in all, seven days, and a lucky stone for each day."

Allen placed the pin in his pocket. He had seen many like it in the cheap bazars at the yearly carnivals. But the ring seemed to be a genuine curio.

"The black scarab" said Allen. "Tomorrow I'll look it up. There ought to be some books about the things."

He was too much interested in his new possession and its probable history to think of his princess as he had become accustomed to designate the lady of his dreams. But that night the dreams were unusually vivid. They were in a great vaulted hall, where the light came dimly. And she was arrayed in a costume of gauze, thickly woven with golden threads. Scene after scene rolled before him as a moving cinematograph—they were together before a great throne, and sounds of weeping were

in the air. Weeping slaves removed her royal robes and dressed her in white garments. An armed guard closed about her, and he knew that they were taking her away. Her head was held like a queen's but she turned and looked at him holding out his arms in a last appeal. She sprang away from those about her and running swiftly down the hall flung her arms about his neck and clung to him.

There was instantly great confusion. He could hear the clamor and hurry of men to and fro, but he could not move or clasp her to him. Perspiration stood on his forehead as he remained like a statue, feeling the arms of the girl cling tightly about him, and knowing some horrible danger threatened, yet he was powerless to avert it.

There was a deafening crash and he awoke to find his arms numb and cold from the cramped position in which he had lain. The brass tongs had fallen on the tiled hearth, which awakened him, and the stone walls and angry crowds of people had vanished. He was alone in his familiar room.

The next day he found his way to the library and inquiring for a book about scarabs was led through one corridor and another to a small room where his guide said cheerfully:

"If Miss Blane cannot find what you want, sir, there is no use to hunt further. She spends all of her time delving in Egyptian."

The girl behind the desk lifted her eyes to Allen, and he recognized, with a start of surprise, the face which so haunted him: the lady of his dreams;

the hair which grew thick and low on her forehead was arranged in modern fashion, and her slim figure was garbed in the conventional blouse and skirt, but the eyes were the same, long and mysterious; the delicate nose; and full-lipped mouth with that haunting smile. By a great effort he recalled himself and making known his errand was soon seated at a table looking with interest at the books she placed before him. But his interest in scarabs had diminished. Every movement of the girl recalled some one of his mysterious dreams—even her voice held every well remembered cadence.

He sat a long time there among the books fascinated by the girl, who, though he knew he had never met before, yet seemed to have an appearance as though meeting him after a long journey. She seemed to have a wonderful knowledge of the history and customs of the early Egyptians, and brought him many books and pictures, but among all the scarabs there were no black ones. He did not dream that night of the girl, but he returned to the library again next day and soon became a regular visitor. There were never many people in the alcove devoted to the Egyptian literature and here he would sit and read and perhaps talk for a little while each day. Once while looking at an engraving of a broken wall of a sarcophagus he picked up a pencil and sketching lines and characters similar to those in the picture, as though completing the portion missing, the girl leaning over his shoulder watched him, and presently she said, pointing with one long tapered finger:

"And right here was the great figure of Râ—the same which was carved on the wall of the arch." Her voice died away as she looked at him with frightened eyes. Allen pushed aside the books and bent over the papers, drawing rapidly.

"Like this?" he inquired. "And here where it is broken off in the picture was the lotus which does not show. The work on the arch was better done. But how hot it was in there." He spoke in a half whisper, and the girl answered in the same tone.

"Yes, but the shadow of the wall on the river side was cool; and the moonlight—"

"Oh—what are we saying? Who are you? And I? Who am I?"

She looked at him with frightened eyes and then dropped her head on her arms.

"Do you remember?" she began.

"I remember lots of things," he answered, "but you most of all. I have dreamed about you dozens of times, until the night before I came here, when a horrible nightmare nearly killed me. I—we were in a hall and something awful was happening—"

She spoke: "Your hands were tied—and they were going to carry you away—oh! I've had that dream over and over—it's horrible," and she shivered violently.

Allen laid his hand over hers protectingly.

"Never mind—they were only bad dreams" he said, as though speaking to a child, but she raised her face quickly:

"Are you sure they are only

dreams?" she asked. "You wear a strange ring. Look!" and she drew from within the folds of her blouse a thin gold chain on which was suspended a small, dark charm—she held it out to him with shaking fingers and within he saw that the small dark object was a black scarab, identical with his, save that the ring was smaller.

"This was given to me by a lady who bought it over in Egypt. She said that there was a story that it had been found in an old mummy case, and because it was so odd, no one would buy it. I had helped her here in the library preparing lists of places and so on, for her to visit, and she knowing my love for such things, brought it home to me. She said an old man gave it to her in return for some kindness and told her it was a rare scarab. I have never forgotten the way I felt when I saw you with that ring on. And those dreams—I thought I was going insane."

Allen laid a protecting hand on the soft hair. She put her hand up to her head, and continued:

"Do you think that I am going insane?"

"If you are—I am also—and I think—oh! well—we'll have lots of experiences to compare—but first let us try to find out something about these scarabs. Is there any one who can tell us?"

"Yes, there is the old archæologist at the Museum—he might tell us."

"We'll go there. When? Tonight?" he questioned.

"Tonight? Yes. I am off at

five o'clock," she replied softly.

"Then I'll call here for you. And now—don't—please, don't worry about it.

With a smile she said: "It's almost like the 'Brushwood Boy'—isn't it? Kipling's story, you know."

"Don't know it—but I don't think it's like anything that ever happened to any one—in a story or out of it. Promise me you'll be here at five. I may wake up and find this a dream."

Then as others entered the room, he bowed and left.

At five o'clock he found her waiting—a little pale and nervous—but looking into his eyes with a brave smile as they walked up the avenue to the museum. They spoke of commonplace things and made no reference to either dreams or scarabs.

Walking side by side they hurried to the museum and upon inquiring for the Egyptian Museum man were taken into a room filled with many glass cases containing relics, while several cases of mummies rested on the floor. An old man with flowing beard and black skull cap came to meet them from a little room adjoining. The girl greeted him by name and in a few words she explained that Allen had come to see if this ring which he had purchased was a genuine scarab or not.

The old man bent his head over the small circle which Allen laid in his hand and peered at it a moment. Then he spoke slowly:

"Hum—the black scarab—this is most strange—there is a legend of such a thing—but never—"

"Oh, please tell us!" cried the girl eagerly. "Even if this isn't a genuine

scarab—tell us the legend—please.”

“It is long ago” said the old man. “I cannot remember—but—” looking up into the two eager faces before him, “if you will some tomorrow at this hour—there are seldom visitors then—I shall endeavor to look through the manuscripts and find it. This ring, now, I cannot say. It appears good—but there are clever imitations; still I do not see how any one would imitate that scarab. It has a strange story and little is known. Will you leave it, sir? And I can examine it closer.”

“I think it is an uncanny thing,” replied Allen. “And I’m afraid to leave it, lest I lose my luck. I don’t care so much about the stone, if we may have the story.”

Walking down the avenue, both apparently thoughtful, Allen said: “Tomorrow night we’ll know.”

“I can not wait for tomorrow” said the girl, “and yet I’m half afraid.”

“May I go home with you?” asked Allen. “And we can talk.”

“Oh!” she said, “I have no home. I just board at the Y. W. C. A. It is near the library. It is quiet and safe. My parents are dead. I was just wishing I had some place to ask you to come in for a cup of tea.”

“Well, then,” said Allen, “you and I will have supper together and we’ll go to a play—Miss Ames—at the Association—knows me. That was one of my mother’s pet fads and I’ve always kept up her gifts to it. I’ll go there now and wait for you.”

While he waited in the reading room of the building, after a brief conversation with Miss Ames, whose

stern visage relaxed into a smile as she greeted him, Allen tried to collect himself and think it out rationally—but there was no explanation. They—beyond a doubt had remembered things seen in another existence—and all through the evening every glance exchanged between them—every word spoken seemed merely a renewal of some confidence of long ago. Every trick of gesture and expression was strangely familiar. They both avoided speaking of the dreams or the strange rings, and parted from each other at the bars of the elevator shaft with great formality—but beneath it was the consciousness of a strong bond—unbreakable.

The next evening he called for her at the library and they made their way to the museum rather silently. The old antiquity professor was waiting for them in the little inner room. On the table were piles of yellow parchments, musty black books and scarabs. When they were seated, he said:

“I found the story—but I had to hunt many places before I had it all. Perhaps it is only a legend. But I think not. It may not have anything regarding your ring, but I will tell it to you. I have copied it from many sources—briefly, it is this: ‘About the time of the sixth dynasty one of the kings of Egypt had a daughter. She was a damsel of great beauty and betrothed to a mighty man—and it chanced that the king had ordered a great tomb built for his family and among the sculptors there came strangers—and one was young and well favored. And

the eyes of the king's daughter saw him as he sat in the sun at his carving. And she straightway loved him. By the aid of a slave she disguised herself and stole out to meet him, and they met often. She would sit beside him as he worked and his comrades jeered at him for his love for a slave. But it chanced a soldier of the king passing one noon-tide recognized the daughter of his royal master, and he straightway went and told the king. And lo, the king was so angry that he ordered him instantly slain and then set spies upon the princess and the spies confirmed the story. Then the king himself walked out and saw his daughter steal away from the royal palace one moonlight night and slip through the rushes and marshes down to the river bank, and there she was clasped in the arms of her lover, while on the shining water of the river was a craft loaded with food for a journey.

"Before they could loosen the craft from its mooring they were captured and carried to the Judgment Hall. There before the day dawned all the people were summoned and the wrath of the king was very great. The lover was sentenced to death. The princess was to be given unto the temple to become a priestess of Isis, to work out her forgiveness.

"But the princess defied them all, and openly declared that she rejoiced in her iniquity, and that as heretofore she had chosen him in secret, she did now declare before all the people that he was her accepted lover, and him only would she acknowledge as her lord.

"Then the wrath of the king increased ten fold and he ordered her to be put to death also. Her death was to be a terrible one. She was to be walled in alive in the inner recesses of the tomb which he was building. She was his last child and very fair and young, and his heart was set upon her marriage. Then he ordered her to be clothed in the white gown of the dead and all her jewels to be stripped from her and he ordered his artisan to have made two scarabs of black with the beetle symbol of immortality to be bound, and the words "wicked and faithless" to be graven within. And since there had never been sin like this he ordered that these scarabs should be unlike any ever before, and that there should never again be any like them. So they were made of black.

"And before the guards led the princess away, she turned to look at the lover and seeing his face full of grief and love, she broke away from her guards, ran and clasped him about the neck and kissed him—and it seemed as though the very heavens were moved, for a mighty wind rocked the temple and a great column fell and crushed them beneath it. And so their sentence of death was fulfilled quickly. The body of the lover was cast into the river; the princess's remains borne to the family tomb.

"The black scarabs were placed on them both by the order of the king, but the artisan who made them being young and touched by the great love of the young couple, placed these words, 'Faithful and eternal' on the inside of them instead of what the

king had ordered placed there."

"That, my young friends, is the story—fanciful—but pretty—and no doubt true. If I may now glance at the under surface of the scarab with the aid of my glass I can soon tell."

"Oh, No! No!" cried the girl. "Don't look! Besides, we must hurry. Thank you!" She rose and fastened her coat with nervous fingers, while Allen, seeing her nervousness, hastened to add his thanks and bid the professor good night.

The streets outside were filled with mist and the lights made orange blotches on the damp walks. Neither spoke as they walked rapidly for a few minutes and then Allen saw that she was crying. Taking her arm he lead her gently into the broad doorway of the old church they were just then passing. Then quite naturally his arms were about her and her head was on his shoulder.

"Now don't cry" he said, softly. "All our troubles were over a few thousand years ago. We're alive and together, so what's the use."

"I know," she sobbed, "but it's all so—so queer—please let me cry about it for a minute!"

"Cry away then," he answered cheerfully, "but don't be long, for we've lots to talk about. Of course

we'll take our wedding trip up the Nile. And if we find that old Pharaoh's tomb I'll treat it with respect—for I'd rather have you now, than to have eloped with you a few centuries back."

Six months later a matter-of-fact English woman, touring Egypt, said to her husband in their room:

"You know that young American couple who seem so fond of each other? Fancy what a queer thing I heard today. We were looking at the ruins of that tomb on the island—and he said: 'See! Right here is where the lotus border was left unfinished—I suppose when we left, they quit right there.' And she said: 'Yes, and you had planned for it so.' Fancy—and yet this is their first trip, I know—for she told me that she had never crossed the ocean before."

"Well—don't you know," said her stolid husband, "these Americans—they are always doing and saying odd things. No doubt their meaning was perfectly clear to themselves."

And Mr. and Mrs. Allen Maxwell, who were listening eagerly in their own room, on the other side of the thin partition, smiled at each other in perfect understanding.



Amar Singh

BY FLORENCE BLAIR



COULD imagine anything happening among these mountains; it's the commonplace and material which have no place here. Tell

me the wildest story of fairies and spirits who wander among these hills, and I will believe them. Why, Ralph, I can almost see them!" cried Barbara Blount.

Captain Walsh looked at his fiancée intently. "I believe you could," he said slowly. "We all have eyes, but they don't always see. Sometimes, I believe we poor mortals have our hour of vision, and things we have only felt before, do become visible to our eyes."

"If I don't have my hour among these hills, I shall never have it," said Barbara softly. "Today, the veil seems very thin to me—I can almost see—"

The plain of Cashmere lay before them, bathed in softest sunshine. It seemed as if it were at their very feet that the winding river flowed through fields of waving crops, past clustering villages, on through the Vale that travellers had come thousands of miles to see. The clouds had cleared and, far away in the distance, snow-capped mountains cut into the blueness of the sky with sharp, jagged outlines; softest tints of blue and amethyst and pink lay on the nearer hills, dark purple shadows chased each other

over the pine woods that clothed the slopes, among which the little summer settlement of Gulmurg lay. The very wind itself seemed to whisper the secrets it had learned, as it passed over the wild tracts that lay beyond the distant inaccessible mountains, which stood looking down upon the peaceful valley. It was a sight to stir the most torpid of imaginations, to tear the scales from the blindest eyes, to wake every sleeper to things even undreamed of before.

"We must start down now or we shall be benighted in the woods," cried Captain Walsh, springing to his feet. "Come, Barbara, we have a long tramp before us and not too much time to do it in. If I let you, you would dream here forever!"

"I can't see—I can't see—yet," murmured Barbara sadly, as she took one last look over the silent plain to the great mountain ranges beyond. In a few minutes, they were well on their way, following a little mountain stream as it bubbled and dashed over stones and boulders on its course to the valley. The crest of the hill was bare and clean of trees, which grew thickly only on the lower slopes, and looked like a vague purple blot far below. The ground was stony and very rough-going, with sudden steep dips and depressions strewn with rocks, between which coarse grass and wild mountain plants struggled for life.

"Take care you don't fall," called

out Captain Walsh warningly, as he watched his fiancée step nimbly on ahead from stone to stone. The sentence was hardly out of his mouth, when it ended in muffled swearing, and Barbara turned to see him hopping on one leg while he nursed the other in both hands. When she reached his side, he was very white.

"Here, sit on this rock. Phew! Your ankle is swollen. I'll have your sock off in a minute."

Captain Walsh said nothing more. He had exhausted his vocabulary and had nothing further to say upon the subject, as to him repetition was always distasteful. He hopped as near the stream as he could and let Barbara bathe his ankle and improvise a bandage with her scarf. Then he forced on his sock, seized his stick, and said with determination: "Let's push on."

He did push on for a few minutes, with uneven hops, then collapsed.

"Look here, Barbara," he said quietly, "I see there's only one thing to be done. You must go down to Gulmurg by yourself and send up a dandy with coolies to carry me down before nightfall; after dusk, I should freeze here and be stiff by the morning. I would not ask you to do it unless I knew that you would be all right. The country people are quite harmless. Take Sam with you and follow this track till you get to the *murg*. If you go briskly, you'll be down in two hours."

Barbara saw that this was the only thing to be done, so, wrapping Captain Walsh in her overcoat and whistling to the dog, she started off down the hillside, as briskly as she could.

"Bear a little to the left when you get to the *murg*," he shouted.

"All right. I'll be as quick as I can," she cried, waving to him gaily. Her two months' climbing and golfing in Gulmurg had hardened her muscles and made her fit and strong. Her short country-made "puttoo" skirt hung clear of her boots and, as she walked along, she swung her stick with the light-heartedness of youth and health.

After twenty minutes' brisk walking, she left the stony ground and came out upon the grassy stretch or *murg*, that bordered the woods. How lucky that Ralph had warned her to keep to the left; she would never have remembered! She crossed it briskly and, passing into the shade of the pines which clothed the side of the hill, started to go down through the maze of dark trunks which rose up straight and stately like a very forest of masts. After a while, she put up her hand to push away some hair which had fallen over her eyes and found that it was damp. Was this smoke among the trees? If so, it must mean that some Cashmeri huts were near. No, it was not smoke, but the clinging mountain mist that climbers dread, which closes around them with such a soft, caressing touch and, so often, becomes their winding sheet. The faintest chill of fear crept into Barbara's mind, but, as yet, it lingered only in the background.

She made another trend to the left and pushed on steadily with quick steps and eyes which peered anxiously ahead to see if there was any break in the trees. Suddenly, a curious sinking sensation in her left foot made

her stop. The heel of her boot had come off and the nails dug into her foot at every step. She had to adopt a sort of ambling trot in order to keep upon her toes. Sam kept well to heel; all the spirit had gone out of him. And, every moment, the mist thickened.

All at once, a dreadful thought flashed into her mind with the swiftness of an unexpected blow. Suppose she had missed her way and was wandering down one of the many wooded *nullahs* which surrounded Gulmurg and Ralph had to spend the long hours with those terrible chills creeping up around him? She knew only too well the bitter cold of a September night in Cashmere and that exposure on the crest of the hill for hours meant almost certain death. She, at least, could keep warm and on the move all night, but what chance had he? The air was already beginning to sharpen and sting as the evening crept on. Barbara remembered that the first time she had ever seen him, at a club dance in Dindi, tall and soldierly in his mess kit, she had thought that he would not give up his life without a struggle, and it returned to her mind now with the sinister swiftness of an ill-omen. Was that struggle to be made to-night?

She wrenched the most painful nails out of her boot and pressed on steadily, with a sort of dogged courage which forced the dreadful thought as far from her as possible. The dark trunks of the trees were still wrapped in a haze of white, which just touched their outlines with a softening finger and made them look dim and elusive. She had been walking for three hours,

just the time it had taken them to climb up. She was certain now, she had gone wrong and missed the way but, to retrieve the mistake, in a place where all was dim and every sound muffled, seemed impossible. A cold blank feeling of utter despair rushed in upon her.

Suddenly a figure loomed up out of the mist ahead. It looked almost like a stunted tree only, at the top, there was something large and strange.

As Barbara looked steadily, she saw it was a man standing quite motionless in the track at the place where two paths met, as though he were waiting for a traveller. Something in his still, expectant attitude made Barbara draw back suddenly into the undergrowth and watch him with frightened eyes, while the sharp beats of her heart seemed to her like the blows of a hammer on an anvil. For the first time in her life she felt the full presence of fear—not the vague stirring of alarm which moves in us when we sense the fluttering of its garments as it hurries by—but as if it had come very close and held her firmly in its grip.

As she peered through the mist, her eyes gradually grew more accustomed to the uncertain light and she saw it was a native who stood facing her, with a large turban wound round his head. She watched him and felt sure he was listening intently, with a sort of tense expectancy, waiting for someone in the very heart of the forest. And suddenly, she knew, with the subtle but absolute conviction that comes to us sometimes, that it was for her, and that he was now watching her intently.

A mad longing to break away from those quiet eyes seized her, to rush away into the misty depths of the undergrowth and lose herself utterly in the dim vistas of the pine trees.

The horror of passing that still figure seemed—like the awful tasks we have to compel ourselves to perform in nightmares—impossible to face. Then the thought of Ralph crept into her mind, till the fear for herself gently loosened its hold and she went slowly forward down the path over the soft pine needles.

As she drew nearer, she saw that it was no Cashmeri herdsman, but a Sikh Sepoy, who stood at the turn of the path. His fierce black beard was brushed back, his long almond-shaped eyes glowed dark beneath his turban, his tall massive form stood immovable in a strange stillness. A curious white scar which marked his left cheek touched a chord of memory in her mind and, with a sob of relief, she recognized her fiancé's orderly, Amar Singh, a man whose business it was to stand between his master and death on active service, whose life he had to guard even at the cost of his own. He had evidently become anxious at their non-appearance and had come out into the forest to meet them. Barbara knew she could never make herself understood nor explain Ralph's position, so she followed him without a word as he turned round sharply up a track to the right and stumbled along behind him, her fear quieted, and hope fluttering back to life.

Then Sam began to give trouble. Like many another Sahib-taught dog, he had always hated natives, and now he hung back and whined and when

Barbara attempted to drag him along, he cringed on the ground in sheer terror. In a frenzy of impatience, she picked him up and carried him as there was no time to lose. In a few minutes, he ceased struggling and lay still and inert, giving only an occasional whine.

Amar Singh walked on ahead, as straight as one of the pine trees.

They splashed through a little stream, then down a wooded slope on which the trees grew more thinly. The mist was clearing now and Barbara wondered, as she hurried along after him, why the old Sepoy thought a woman worth the saving, but, perhaps, he realized that his Sahib's life hung on her reaching Gulmurg before sundown.

They came to a clearing where a primitive-looking collection of Cashmeri huts clustered, and from which a wailing sound of singing came. The singing ceased and all grew strangely silent as they passed by.

A pariah dog came slinking after them, his evil eyes gleaming with a furtive, wolf-like, look, his thin body slipping through the trees like a shadow. Then he turned suddenly and fled, scratching and tearing himself in his headlong flight.

Amar Singh walked on straight ahead as before.

Barbara's foot caught in a root and, lurching forward, she tried to catch at the Sepoy to save herself from falling, but she was farther away than she had imagined and she slipped to the ground on to the soft pine needles with a gentle thud. They turned a corner of the path and came upon an old woman gathering sticks.

As they passed, she shrank away and pressed her thin, shrunken body as far back into the undergrowth as she could. Barbara looked back and saw her scuttle away, scattering her sticks in all directions as she ran, while a queer, cracked scream echoed among the trees.

At last, when Barbara's anxiety for Ralph had almost reached breaking point, they came to the edge of the clearing and found themselves on level ground, with the cup-like basin, in which Gulmurg lay, before them. At the sight of her father's hut, she broke into a run, and dashing past Amar Singh ran up the path and into the hall. In ten minutes' time a dandy, borne by four coolies, had started up the hill, led and directed by Colonel Blount himself, and to Barbara's intense relief they returned a few hours later with Ralph, who appeared to be fairly comfortable.

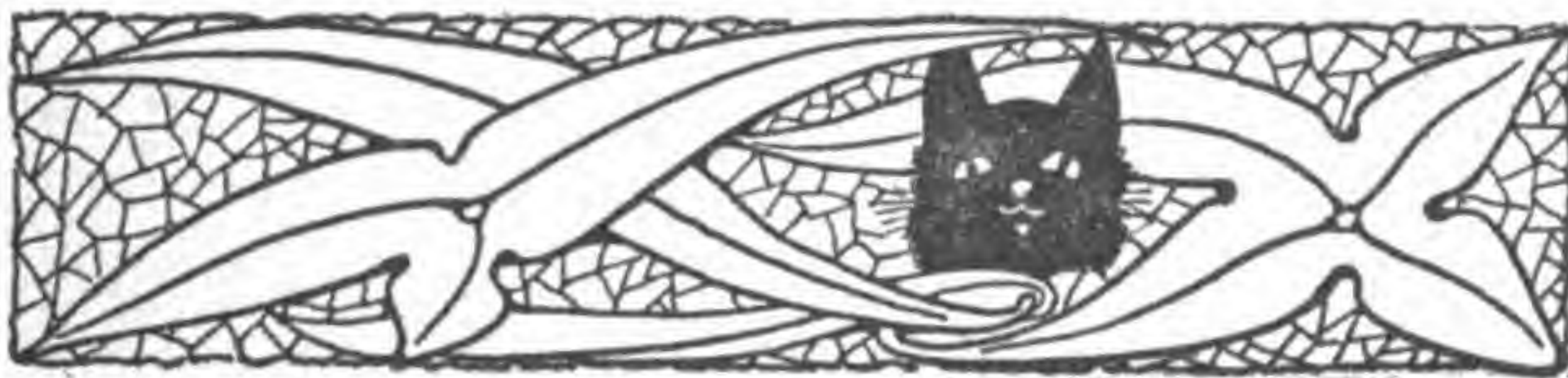
After dinner, Barbara came and sat by her fiancé's side. The fatigue and anxiety of the afternoon had left behind a vague sense of restlessness in her mind, over which a shrinking feeling of apprehension seemed to hover, and which resisted all her efforts to dispel.

"Ralph, why did you never tell me that you had brought up old Amar Singh here with you?" she asked at last.

Captain Walsh looked at her curiously and intently. Then he knocked the ashes out of his pipe and, as she waited for his answer, each tap seemed to Barbara to mark a perfect æon of time.

"Because he died of fever two months ago in Pindi," he answered slowly.

"Ah, I have seen—I have had my hour of vision at last," murmured Barbara with trembling lips.



In Ashes Burn Their Wonted Fires

BY EDITH MINITER



WFUL glad there's a moon," Clymenia Clemons said to herself, as she panted up the path to the house door. "I don't fancy those woods when it's pitch dark."

The way was shadowed by shrubs, but her feet did not stray.

"It seems as if the grass were getting long," she thought, and bent over to make sure. Yes, it was wet with dew. She was close to the step now, and shook her dampened skirts. As her foot struck the boards a small animal scuttled from behind the vine-shaded post and vanished.

She peered into the half light. "Was that a kitten," she wondered, "or just one of the old cats? They ought not to be afraid of me. When I bring their food out I can't step without they are all under foot."

The porch looked very white and clean in the moonlight. Even the posts that supported the roof, made from slender tree trunks with the stumps of boughs left protruding, looked colorless, though Clymenia was well aware they were dark brown.

"The moonlight's great on altering things," she mused, as she went into the house. It was so warm a night she did not feel surprised to find the door open. In the kitchen the cool night air met with a variety of odors, which she instantly distributed within her mind, ascribing the damp to the

cellar, the soot to the uncleaned chimney, the acrid smell to the vinegar barrel that was ever dripping in a back room and a tale of grease to "mother's frying a few doughnuts after supper." She even thought of seeking a few in the pantry, but desisted.

"Pa and ma are in the little bedroom," she murmured. "I can't risk waking them. They would want to know what kept me up so late. They always want to know. I'll hurry up to bed without lighting a candle."

A sleepy chirp startled her, and then she laughed softly. It was mother's canary, to be sure, over in the corner, hung so high the cats could not get at it, and sound asleep with mother's apron over the cage.

She lifted the latch and cautiously crept upstairs, her eyes staring into the utter blackness. Her heart beat with such violence that it seemed as if the little house must shake, and when she neared a stair which memory told her always creaked she stepped right over it, and was soon safe on the top landing.

There were two doors before her. For a moment she had an idea of entering the large room over the kitchen. The best room it was, and in it, with no better light than that of the moon, Clymenia loved to see her slender figure reflected in the one long mirror of the house, to advance and retreat coquettishly, to smirk, to look stern for a moment, and then to break into dimple-decked smiles; in brief, to

rehearse the little comedy she had played during the evening, afar down the road, for the benefit of her lover, Dick Morehead. It was a fascinating play, but dangerous if her stern parents found it out. After a moment's temptation Clymenia decided to have none of it this night.

"Yes, of course," she whispered, "I remember what Dick says, not to mind father and mother; that scoldings can't hurt and I'm too big to whip or shut up, but I feel frightened just the same. It's—it's weird tonight, too, more than usual."

Finding her own door ajar she hurried down the two steps leading to it, knocking her head against the ceiling.

"Well, well," she scolded herself, "seems as if I never can gauge that old ceiling right. I never seem to remember I'm grown up; I bump my forehead every time I come here in the dark."

The roof encroached upon the tiny room, beginning at a point right above the door, and sloping at an acute angle until within a foot of the floor. A narrow bed cuddled under the eaves. At one end, where the wall was highest, stood a chest of drawers, atop of which was a looking-glass, with the quicksilver wearing off, so that it reflected only in spots.

At the other end, Clymenia could dimly see the bulk of the tall wardrobe that held her slender stock of frocks. The bed was in disorder—its coverlids dragging on the floor, but Clymenia had little disposition to do more than throw herself upon it, fully dressed. She had much to think about, and had indeed slept but little in the wonderful summer nights since Dick

Morehead had come to help in the haying at Whittier's down below, and Clymenia had stolen out each evening to meet him by the flat bridge in the meadow. Each evening, too, she had lingered longer, their parting had been more reluctant, and her heart had beaten more tumultuously after memory began to busy itself as now, among scenes that seemed continually repassing.

"Oh, Dick," she whispered, into the warm, soft hand that she had placed on either cheek, in imitation of the way Dick himself had held her face not long ago, "what's to come of it all? By and by the hay will be made, and you will have to go away. You say to kiss and be happy while we can, but I can't feel that way, only when I am right with you. You have nothing, Dick, for us to live on if we should run away, and besides, it will be four more years before you finish your studies and can be set apart to preach and have a home. And then father will not be any more willing I should marry you than he is now. The Clemons always hated the Moreheads, and so he thinks they always should."

It was a tangle, with no clue as yet; and so, as ever, Clymenia put aside her grief and turned to happier thoughts—to visions of Dick as he had looked in the moonlight, ruddy faced with gleaming eyes, or as when he went his separate way down the road after they had parted. She had watched until he was almost out of sight, and then had turned away her eyes so as to avoid seeing him quite disappear, because of the old superstition that if she did so he might never return.

"And after all," she thought, "I was

in such a hurry that I looked up too quick, and there he was, turning the corner. And wasn't I a silly girl, to want to call him back? I did run down the road a ways almost shouting, but he did not hear, and tomorrow I'll see him again, just the same!"

So, smiling in fond fancy of that same tomorrow, even as she shivered with trifling apprehensions, she dropped into sleep. Once she partly awoke, disturbed by a sound, and asked sharply, "What's that?" Then, in silent mirth, she replied, "Clymenia, you great goose! It's only your father's watch, ticking away in the spare room. The door must be ajar, after all, or I could not hear it so plainly."

Hours went by; the moon sank; and the red ball called the summer's sun arose. It was very quiet hereabout, yet the wakening of plant and bird life makes confusion that causes the light sleeper to stir. Clymenia opened her eyes, lay quiet a few moments, and sat up exclaiming, "Gracious, I must hurry. I want to iron that pink muslin so I can wear it tonight, and finish the oakleaf edging for my petticoat, besides."

A moment more, and the little old house rang with her shrieks. The room in which Clymenia found herself bore, in shape and size, semblance to the one she believed herself to have entered the night before, but otherwise it was not the same. In vain she looked for the rosebud paper she had hung on the walls with her own hands; for the frilled curtains she had starched and strung over the long window. A wisp of dirty rag hid one broken pane. The walls were crumbling. The wardrobe door yawned,

showing vacancy save for the pile of neatly drilled nuts that proved this to have been the place of a squirrel's winter hoard. The bed was indeed disordered, for the rotten bedstead was covered by a squalid straw mattress, over which dragged a torn coverlid, mildewed with rain from the leaking roof.

Clymenia dashed into the tiny hall and flung open the spare room door. No furniture remained; the floor was sunken, and a great hole in the wall let in the branch of a tree. Downstairs she almost fell, and saw, with growing horror, that the stair which always creaked, and over which she had so carefully stepped in the night, was a yawning cavity.

As for the kitchen, it was plain why she had felt the night air, for there was no door to close, and every pane in the window was shattered. A pair of birds had built their nest on a tiny shelf high up in one corner. Above its edge tiny heads appeared, with great beaks gaping for food. Mother's canary was gone; why its successors had befooled Clymenia in the moonlight might be plainly understood. There was nothing else in the room excepting a horrible heap of rubbish in the fireplace. Like a whirlwind, Clymenia went through the house. In the little bedroom where she had imagined her parents calmly sleeping, the floor had gone through to the cellar, and the plaster sagged inward until the walls nearly met. The pantry was crumbled to a mass of debris; she could see the surface of the well that formerly fed the pump. It was covered with a blue scum, mixed with rotting leaves.

On the porch, in the morning sunlight, Clymenia stood in ever growing fright. Last night, in the moonlight, had she not been young, of pulsating heart, creeping to her bed after an evening of happiness with Richard, fearful only of waking her parents? Today she woke and found the house a ruin, the path choked with weeds, wild squirrels chattering about, instead of the domesticated tabby cats that she had imagined beside the door. Was this a dream, or had she been dreaming in the moonlight? She pinched herself and felt it plainly; she touched the wood and it was rough; she knew that she was awake.

Clymenia retraced her steps into the little room. The looking-glass still hung above the dilapidated chest of drawers. Focussing her face until it was opposite a bit that still seemed to possess the power of reflection, Clymenia rubbed it round and round with her elbow, removing the dust and smear of years, and then looked long and anxiously.

In place of clear blue eyes, flaxen curls, pink and plump cheeks, she gazed at a section of brown skin marked by intersecting wrinkles. There was visible a single straying lock of white hair, with never a hint of curl.

It wasn't just the house, then; she too, was an old wreck. How it had come to be she could not understand; she would go out into the road and think.

Once in the road instinct led her away from the ruined house, without a backward glance. People looked from their windows and said, "There goes Clymenia Clemons; it's a wonder

the almshouse keeper lets her wander about alone." And one or two old dames, with groping memory, tried to recall her history, but spoke only vaguely of a time when her father had given it out that his daughter was insane. One Richard Morehead, a young student who had afterward become a famous man, had raged at Clymenia's father, but had never been allowed to see the afflicted girl. For more years than could be counted, she had been a prisoner in her father's home, fed through a barred window that was closely shuttered whenever callers came to the Clemon's house. And then the old folks had died, and Clymenia became a town charge; the authorities making use of the Clemon's land for payment, but letting the house fall into ruin, as it was on a byroad and no one cared to live in it. Clymenia, it was known, was gentle and easy to care for; her only sign of dementia being a total lack of understanding that she was anything but the girl of eighteen who had been thrust into that bedroom cell by her father long years before.

While sturdily walking in the growing heat of the morning, Clymenia increased in bravery, and she was able to span the long years and hitch the present to the far-distant past.

Ere long the way she absently followed led into one of those valleys that nestle amid mountains, where a creek flows over moss-grown stones between banks shaded by flags and lush grass, while untrimmed trees keep out the sunshine. There is a chill in such places, even on a summer morning. Clymenia shivered; and while she stood, trembling pitifully, there

came another memory of the night.

"Father's watch," she whispered, with parched lips. "I surely heard it. I woke and listened for a long while. I counted up to seventy before I fell asleep. And yet it was never a watch."

She recalled superstitions about the "death watches" that ticked in walls as "warnings." Yes, that was it.

"And I seem," she said, calmly stretching out her hand, "to be along toward seventy. It was for me. Well, perhaps 'tis as well."

Shuddering, she sank into the muddy road, and lay there. She had fallen so that her slender body fitted into a deep rut, and it was almost as if she were already in a damp grave. Lying with the ear close to the earth, one quickly becomes conscious of any unusual vibration, and such presently stirred Clymenia. As she sat up and mechanically brushed the mud from her arms, a second wave passed by, and then a third.

The foliage of the trees grew so low that had Clymenia been standing she could have seen nothing, but as it was, she got a glimpse between the sedges of the adjacent meadow, back to where the old house had dominated the landscape for almost a century.

It would do so no more, for the sounds marked a last protest against descending from the standard of a home to a simple mass of rubbish.

Clymenia spoke aloud. "It's fallen into the cellar hole," she exclaimed with awe. "The chimney went first, and then the walls crumbled like cardboard."

She looked at the muddy crevice of earth, in which she had lain, and was fain to settle back forever. She spoke, for the one time in her life, with anger. "Oh, why," she moaned, "did that not come last night, when I was there, all unsuspecting?"

Then a twig moved in a passing breeze; one ray of warm sunlight fell on her forehead and roused her love of life. At the same moment two men came up, stopped and stared. Said one, "She has been so placid we gave her perfect liberty. She has been busy sewing and tending the sick. We never suspected she would run away. Now, Mr. Morehead, I do not think we can assume the responsibility of her any longer. Besides, the amount of her property is about used up."

The spirited man, with whitened locks belied by a firm mouth and a pair of flashing eyes, looked at Clymenia, and saw that she was his at her first waking moment, just as she had been at the instant when her father's cruelty condemned her to a life of death. He had just passed the fallen house; had learned from a neighbor that Clymenia was seen coming from it but half an hour ere it fell.

He removed his hat and lifted his face to the heavens. "Thank God," he said, in simple gratitude, "that in His divine mercy that came today, and not when she was there, all unsuspecting."

Then, holding out his hand, "Come, Clymenia," he said, "we still have Indian Summer before us, and it's often the best of all the year."



A Five by Seven Talk With the Editor

To Readers:

It is admitted THE BLACK CAT is not a big magazine in the matter of pages. Quality estimated upon that basis would create a false standard.

THE BLACK CAT is big in another way, big because it specializes in the short story instead of concentrating its essence in a novelette and achieving nothing more than neutral tints with the remainder of its contents.

It is the original short story magazine. Each number contains not one but nine complete stories—stories that have zip and zest, piquancy and punch and leave a pleasant afterglow.

The average reader doesn't have the time to read long stories, stories that run to twenty and thirty thousand words. Then again, few stories have the strength of plot and characterization which will warrant such length. In that respect THE BLACK CAT story has the advantage. It gives more satisfaction because it concentrates. That is why THE BLACK CAT eschews the novelette, thinly vamped with vapid, tasteless stories which generally feature *double entente*.

In the final analysis, THE BLACK CAT has just the size and strength of a demi tasse. It is just the magazine for the commuter, making at the same time a distinct appeal to the commuter's family. It is the demi tasse of the all-fiction magazines.

The editor would be pleased to receive the opinions of BLACK CAT readers. Write and tell him what stories and what authors you like and why you like them. Tell him what kind of stories you would like to see in THE BLACK CAT. And if you have a story in your system that you think you could write don't hesitate to try. The editor welcomes stories from unknown writers.

To Writers:

THE BLACK CAT wants stories averaging from 2,000 to 3,500 words, stories that are spicy, with a style that is light rather than ponderous.

You may get an accurate idea of THE BLACK CAT type of story by reading THE THRILLER, a magazine containing thirty-six complete stories, now on all News Stands. Here are some of the titles: "Quilligan and the Magic Coin," "Told in Minor," "The Roundabout Road," "The Rattler," "Jilting Parmelia," "Tea—With a Wink," "John Jones's Dollar," "The Backsliding of Unc' Bad-Eye Johnson."

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THE BLACK CAT, SALEM, MASS.

THE WOMAN WITH THE ODD NECK

BY BEN HECHT

A woman possessing more than one person's share of physical deformities goes to live in a town where ignorance and superstition are conspicuous features. She is looked upon as the advance agent of famine, flood, pestilence and higher tax rates.



WO weeks after she came to our village we tried to drive her out. She had moved into the little frame house at the end of Monument Street,—our haunted house.

Four of our trustees called upon her. They were men who had been born in our village and they had taken the matter of Frieda Heffner into their own hands.

She was a strange old woman, gnarled and misshapen. Our trustees told her that the village did not want her and said they would pay her fare back to the city. They told her the Board was figuring on tearing down the house into which she had moved.

"No good ever came of that house, Miss," said Amos Case, who was a short red-faced man who owned the livery stable. "Tim Donahue who sold the house to you is lying out there in the back yard. He buried himself and how he did it nobody knows. And furthermore you don't look like a woman who belongs and is necessary to this village."

The three trustees with Amos shuffled uncomfortably on their feet. I was one of them. We all tried to keep from looking at Frieda. She was a strange old woman, twisted and with something horrible about her.

There had been a meeting in the Hall a week after Frieda had moved into our haunted house. This house had always been a sore spot in our village. It stood alone at the end of a little road we called Monument Street, a half-rotted, overgrown little house with ugly blotches on its walls. There were elm trees and wild

looking bushes around it and the rain-drip from the leaves had rotted the roof away. The windows upstairs were boarded and downstairs they were broken and patched. Wild things grew in what had been the yard. At night the old house rattled and moaned and people disliked to pass it. About thirty years ago a man named Sam Gifford had killed his wife in the house. He was taken to the county seat and hanged. But for years afterward people said they saw him sitting behind the broken windows.

Then Tim Donahue came to live with us. He was a strange old man who was always drunk and muttering to himself. He came into the village once a month and he was seldom seen at any other time. He stayed in the house day and night and people wondered what he did in there. At night he would sit by the broken window, his white face and red beard framed in the dismal moonlight which shimmered on the house through the dank elms.

One day we saw Tim digging in his back yard. It was mentioned at the store, but nobody paid any attention to it at the time. A few days after he came to the city hall and had a bill of sale recorded. We saw him go back to the house, shuffling down the dusty road and turning around to look at the village with a queer grin every few hundred feet. After he had been missing for two months three of us went to the house to see what had happened to him. We found the house empty, reeking with strange, humid odors. The walls were dripping, and the stains had crawled across the floor consuming the wood and the iron in their wet. Remembering the hole he had been digging in the back yard we went out and dug it up. About five feet underground lay what was

left of Tim Donahue. He had buried himself without a coffin and he looked horrible when we scraped off the earth.

There was some talk about tearing down the house and removing the remains, but nothing ever came of that. Then one day six months later somebody discovered that the house was occupied. Clint Davies was driving in with some milk cans when he saw a strange old woman sitting at a window looking out at the road.

We saw her in the village soon after when she came in to buy supplies of Tom Hunter at the store. She was queer. She walked with a cane although she was neither bent nor lame. Her body was thin and straight and when we watched her walking down Main Street the first time we noticed that she had a habit of stopping and rising on her tiptoes now and then. But the thing about her that made folks stare was her neck and the color of her face. She was old and looked like a woman who had always been old. But there were no wrinkles in her face and her skin was an ashen blue, a lifeless color with a dead gloss over it. And she kept her head on one side as if she were peering at something with her right eye. Her left eye was closed almost tight and as she walked along she appeared to be squinting at the roofs. When she came into the store, Tom Hunter stared at her. I was sitting at the end of the counter. She asked for some bacon and eggs and bread. Her voice was husky and you could hardly hear what she said. While she talked she kept her head cocked over, her eye squinting at the ceiling and not looking at anything else. I saw she had a queer scar on the side of her neck that was stretched. It was a live scar that glowed red when she talked.

Tom Hunter kept turning around to look at her while he gathered together her order. Our village is off the main road a long way and there are a lot of things which our folks believe in that sound foolish when they're mentioned in the city. When the old woman left the store with her packages she stopped in the doorway and suddenly rose on her toes, her head over on one side, her eye cocked on the ceil-

ing and the scar on her neck burning like a sore. Tom Hunter was born in our village and he crossed himself. He remembered Sam Gifford, the murderer, and often he'd told me things about the lonely blind roads that lie in the woods around our village.

"No good is going to come of that old hag," he said, "Now mark my words."

It was not more than a few days after that that folks began to talk about Frieda Heffner—that was her name according to the bill of sale Tim Donahue had made out before burying himself. The women said she was a witch and warned their children not to go near the house after dark.

When Amos Case finished talking to Frieda the day we went to drive her out of the village, she laughed. Her mouth when she laughed became twisted into a queer lop-sided grin that made her look as if the side of her face against her shoulder was paralysed.

"Get out o' here," she said. "Leave me alone if you know what's good."

She waved her cane at the four of us and, still squinting up at the ceiling, while the red scar on her neck glowed brighter than ever, she pushed us out of the house.

"I won't bother you," she called after us, "if you don't bother me. I'm an old woman and I want to be let alone."

We walked away and I turned to look back at her. I noticed how straight her arms hung down by her sides as she stood in the doorway. I said to Tom Hunter, "Look at her, would you!"

He turned and looked.

"Did you ever see anybody stand so straight?" I said.

"Lord," said Hunter, "she's standing on her tip toes!"

Things got worse after that. The women in our village began to tell stories about Frieda. They said she went out at night to the cemetery that was further on down Monument Street, and they said that strange noises had been heard from inside the old house after dark. Now and then someone came driving in from Gillport with another tale of what he'd heard in passing the black elms that hid the

place where Frieda lived. The boys soon broke all the windows and plastered the wall with mud. Once they tried to set fire to the house, but it rained and put the fire out.

One night, a month after our delegation had visited Frieda, I was walking down Monument Street. I had been over to the widow Baker's home and had stayed till nine o'clock. It was dark. There was no moon. The road was full of dead leaves that rustled and jumped under my feet. When I came in front of the house that stood at the end of Monument Street I stopped. There was no light inside but I heard strange noises. It was somebody groaning and every once in a while crying out in a shriek. The wind was blowing and I thought perhaps I was imagining it. I listened to the trees whipping against the roof and the grass whistling shrilly all around me. Things fell in gusts upon the dark shape of the house and the boards that had been placed over the empty windows rattled and creaked and the leaves moaned dismally as they brushed the walls. But I heard the voice growing louder, bursting through the howling of the wind.

I thought perhaps Frieda was sick and I stood trembling. I decided finally to go into the dark house and see. Nobody answered my knock at the door, so I opened it and entered.

The room was black but I could make out a figure crouching in the middle of the floor. I struck a match and saw Frieda. She sat up straight in the ghastly flicker, her lop-sided mouth stretched wide open and her right eye cocked in horror at the ceiling. She was groaning and shrieking. The match went out, and I jumped and called out to her, "What's the matter? Can I do anything for you?"

Her groans grew worse and I found another match and lighted that and then lighted a lamp on a table. In the dim yellow gleam of the lamp her face turned itself toward me and she stood up. I waited for her to come at me but she remained motionless, her eye still cocked at the ceiling. I saw her rise to her tip toes and stand strained with her arms

hanging loose at her sides and the scar on her neck glowing red.

Then she fell down on the floor and I went over and picked her up and took her into another room where there was a bed. She seemed to be asleep so I went away. When I got outside of the house I ran. The lamp had gone out and the house crouched behind me in the darkness.

I did not say anything to anybody but the next morning early I went back and found her eating her breakfast alone. She seemed to be glad to see me and asked me to sit down.

"You came in here last night," she said, "and were nice to me."

She reached out her hand and patted mine. Her hand was cold and the fingers were long and ashen blue. I shivered.

"You were sick last night," I told her. And then I noticed she was crying.

"You're the only one," she said, "who's been nice to me. They've broken all my windows and when they see me in the street they run from me and call me names. I don't dare go out in the daytime because they throw stones at me, so I have to walk in the night."

I felt sorry for her because she was crying and despite her twisted neck and her lop-sided mouth and the color of her face I felt that there was something pitiful about her and I was no longer afraid. I said to her as kindly as I could:

"You ought to go away. The people in our village aren't very broad. They think there's something wrong with you and they're afraid. And besides they don't like your house."

Frieda dried her eyes and still squinting at the ceiling she rubbed the long, stretched side of her neck and began to talk in a low, hoarse voice.

"It hurts me today," she said, "it always hurts me after I've been sick like that. I'll tell you because you ain't a terrible fool like the others. I ain't going to leave this house because I've come here to die. I've been moving from one place to another all my life. They don't let me stay anywhere. They keep driving me away because I look like this and

frighten them and their children. I'm queer. I was born like this with my head twisted and that sore on my neck and my face like this. I had to grow up alone because nobody would play with me. Nobody would marry me when I got older. I've been alone in houses like this all the time. My father kept me in a Home and when he died I got his money and I've been trying to find some place to live. I keep getting sicker all the time, I do, with spells like you saw last night. I can't remember them afterward, but something happens to me that makes me afraid and hurts me and I groan and holler out. I used to have the spells when I was a girl and I've always had 'em. Now they come pretty nearly every night. People have called me a witch and said I'm sold to the devil and said he's twisted me out of shape and put his mark on me. But it ain't so. That's the way I was born and I never meant no harm. But I've always been like this and the doctors don't know what it is, and I'm going to die here."

Frieda stopped talking and moaned. I went away feeling sorry for her, but I didn't go back for a long time. The folks in our village became somewhat used to her although they kept saying no good would come of her and that if the trustees were men they would drive her out and pull the house down.

We had a lot of sickness in our village that fall and this made things bad again. Widow Baker lost one of her girls, and two of Ned Lockwood's boys caught the sickness and one of them died. Old man Meyer died and we had a doctor up from the county seat who said it was a typhoid epidemic. Folks began to blame Frieda.

"The old hag's revenging herself by killing us off," they said, and the talk about driving her out grew serious. When Amos Case got the fever and died things came to a head. There was a meeting in the Hall one night late in October, and after the meeting twenty of the men and a few women started for the house at the end of Monument Street. They carried buckets of tar and a lot of feathers and a long rail ripped off Case's fence.

It was cold and dark and a few of

the men in the lead carried lanterns. They walked without talking. I saw there was no use saying or doing anything, so I just followed along with them.

We reached the house and found it dark. There was no sound from inside. The wind was bending the elms down over the roof and shaking the loose things on the house. The empty windows stared out blacker than the night and the place looked dead in the darkness,—dead, with ugly shadows burying it.

The posse walked up the steps and opened the door. The first man in carried a lantern that he held up in front of his face. But when he looked into the room he dropped it and turned around and yelled:

"For God's sake, let me out!"

The men behind him moved back a little but the women yelled, "Go on! Go on! Let's get her!"

There was a lot of noise and excitement, voices and oaths and shrieks. But the house inside remained dark and silent. And then somebody noticed that the house was afire. The flames were creeping in thin bright lines around the door and glowing blue around the windows. The wind came with a gust and the old house suddenly became a torch, and in the great glare of yellow light which burst into the blackness we saw Frieda hanging by a rope that was hitched to the ceiling. And we rushed across the road and stood looking without a sound.

We saw that the rope around her neck was knotted over the scar and that her head was bent the same way as when she was alive, with her right eye opened in horror and squinting at the ceiling. She seemed just as she had seemed when she used to stand on tip toes with her arms hanging straight down and her head bent and her neck stretched. But now there was nothing strange about her, nothing misshapen. She looked as she had always looked with her face ashen blue in the great glare of the flames; but for the first time she looked natural and all of us understood something.

The roaring flames licked at the rope and she disappeared.

THE DAGGER

By CARROLL K. MICHENER

A dealer in curios has a jeweled dagger reputed to have been Exhibit A in many murders. Because he fears that it might figure in further tragedies he refuses to part with it. But one night a curio collector comes through the window.



LD Whipple sat gazing at the jeweled dagger whose possessor, so the Hindu fakir had said, certainly would kill a woman because of jealousy. Though he was not sure that he believed the Hindu,

he was capable of it; for he was simple-minded, if you listened to some of his neighbors, or a man of much occult knowledge, if you accepted the estimate of those who were more sympathetically disposed. His condition of mind long had been a subject for debate.

Perched insecurely on the top of a tall cabinet in the little office at the rear of his curio shop, the Rookery, where he sat toying with the dagger, was a bronze Buddha. Occasionally he lifted his eyes from the dagger to the malignant features of this image, and as often as he did so he was seized anew with an odd impression, one that had been growing upon him stealthily for a long time. It seemed to him that there was some sort of diabolical kinship between the leering image and the cunning instrument of death that lay under his hands. This impression was not very clearly defined. He did not attempt to define it, for he never had been able to achieve any great satisfaction in analyzing his fancies. They were too elusive and incommensurate. Nevertheless, this imagined relationship between the Buddha and the dagger was as real to him as their physical entities.

Old Whipple turned the dagger over and over, examining it minutely for the thousandth time. It was an unusual weapon. Everything about it was unusual. It was of extraordinary length, and of a

metal that seemed finer and stronger than steel. Perhaps this effect of quality was due to the peculiar luster of the blade, which was more like the luster of bronze than of steel. The blade was without edges; or rather, its edges were smoothly rounded. Its only cutting surface was the point, and that was of a distressing sharpness. In shape, too, the blade presented a certain wicked attractiveness. It tapered from the handle in a gracefully irregular manner to the vengeful point, as if in sleek consciousness of its craft-beauty. The handle was of a wood so hard as to give it the quality of metal, and of a kind that defied naming. The upper and lower ends of the handle were ringed by bronze circlets set with small diamonds. It might have been Florentine, but it might as well have been from the Orient so far as there was any definite indication about it.

The mournful tinkle of the hidden bell that announced his customers interrupted Old Whipple's scrutiny of the dagger. He shuffled out through the cluttered stock of antiques, frowning in an effort to make his watery old eyes report the nature of business that was at hand.

It was not often that he was disturbed. Customers were rare, and for two or three days the bell had been as silent as the sepulchral curio. The Rookery was in a narrow street, lost among tumble-down wooden houses in the older quarter of the city, and there were few aside from the immediate neighbors who knew of it. Those of the neighbors who gave the matter any thought—and they were not many—found difficulty in understanding how Old Whipple managed to make a living. They concluded that what few customers he had must be rich folk; and doubtless this was true, for it was observed

that most of them came in limousines, or stepped warily into the murky street from a more pretentious neighboring thoroughfare, forefending their way with walking sticks held elegantly in well-gloved hands.

It was an expedition such as one of these that now brought the young lawyer, Holloway, and the woman he expected to make his bride. Even Old Whipple's watery eyes were not deceived as to this very apparent intention. With the couple was Holloway's younger brother, the amiable Jim, who caused Old Whipple some anxiety with his blustering about amid the dust and gloom of the shop, looking for the rare something-or-other that remains nebulous to the curio hunter until he finds it. It seemed quite likely to Old Whipple that this potent young man would break something.

After half an hour of rumaging, the trio drifted into old Whipple's office. Holloway's fiancée had caught sight of the green Buddha, and for a long time she stood staring into its malignant countenance. She seemed fascinated.

"What a horror it is!" she exclaimed to Holloway, shrinking against him with something more than mock timidity.

"It's no great beauty, that's true," Holloway admitted. "Still, it rather strikes my fancy. I was just going to suggest that it might not be a bad thing for the new house, that little oriental alcove, you know, where you've put the wooden temple gongs."

"No, oh no!.... Don't you see, Hugh? That's jealousy in the image's face—jealousy, unreasoning, cruel."

"What an imaginative puss you are!"

"Maybe. But it's true... If you're going to buy that—" A strange tremor ran through her, and with an excited laugh she picked up the jeweled dagger from its case on Old Whipple's table. "If you do, I'll have to buy this, too. You see, it's the companion piece: jealousy, and then the dagger."

"You *are* an imaginative puss," commented Holloway, taking the dagger from her curiously tight clasp and handing it to Old Whipple, who seized it with a surprising eagerness.

"I couldn't sell it—I couldn't part with it," chattered the old man. "It has no price."

Jim, who had been looking at a small collection of scarabs, and grunting uncomplimentary doubts of their genuineness, came up and joined the tableau. He whistled slowly as he looked from one to the other.

"What's the matter with you people?" he asked. "You look like the third act in a melodrama. Come on out of this. There's nothing here we want."

Holloway stood for a moment looking curiously at the dagger. He fancied he sensed in himself a reflection of the old man's agitation. Perhaps because of the attractive oddity of the knife he had a desire to touch it, to run his fingers along its smooth blade. He was struck, too, with his fiancée's reference to jealousy, and by the coincidence of having experienced the same extraordinary feeling himself. It was a feeling of which he had said nothing—a sensation for him unexpected, startling, and none the less unmistakable because it was new.

But Holloway was a person who dealt more with facts than with fancies, and he would not permit this fancy to concern him more than momentarily. He laughed at the serious preoccupation of his fiancée as he led her away.

Old Whipple followed them through the shop, holding the dagger carefully in both hands. He kept his eyes fixed, mournfully, on Holloway and the girl, watching them enter the car. He was still visible as they drove off, standing like a gray shade in the midst of his antiques.

Holloway directed Jim, who was driving, to drop him at the city hall.

"Oh, Hugh!" pouted the girl. "You promised to take me to tea."

"But, my dear—business, you know. Maybe I can slip away in time to join you. Jim can take you wherever you like. Only don't wait for me. Maybe I'll come and maybe I can't."

An unusual expression came into the girl's eyes.

"I should think you'd be jealous of Jim—some men would," she said, hurriedly,

feeling at the same time that it was something that might as well have remained unsaid.

But Hugh Holloway only laughed and squeezed the gloved hand that had wandered into his, safely hidden in the deep tonneau of the car from the prying eyes of pedestrians.

Old Whipple stood for a long time after his customers had gone, looking through the unwashed front windows of the Rookery, still holding the dagger in his hands. Then he shuffled back to the office and replaced it in its case. He hovered over it, feebly resisting an impulse to lose himself again in gazing upon it in fanciful absorption. He sank into his chair again, and heaving a great sigh, let his eyes fix themselves upon the weapon with such an attention as to suggest the absorption of a crystal gazer.

Advancing twilight began to obscure the grotesque objects in his shop, bringing even a more profound obscurity to the room where he sat. Still he continued to gaze at the dagger as if he really could see it, or as if it had a luminous quality capable of defying the darkness.

To the neighbors such behavior as this on the part of Old Whipple would not have been surprising. They knew things about him that were perhaps more eccentric than this. Anything might be believed of a man who was reputed to be everything from a black magician to a person who spoke with ghosts. The estimates of the neighbors were formed, of course, not on careful investigation so much as on hearsay; and this source of information was largely the children, who used to bring home strange tales of his behavior until apprehensive parents forbade them to go to the Rookery any more.

It came to be said that it was a whim with him to weave an imaginary story around every article in his shop, and that he spent a good deal of his time writing these stories down when he might better have been about his business. It was rumored, too, that a great professor from the university had come there occasionally to hear the stories, and to be amused, doubtless, at the fancies the old man would

bring up concerning some ancient relic from the university museum.

Then, too, a newspaper once had written up Old Whipple as the strange man who professed to be able to take the alabaster rouge cup of the Egyptian princess who lived so many thousands of years ago as to be very much forgotten, and vision in it not only her long obliterated face and figure, but also the events of her entire life from the day of birth to the day of death.

Of course these things had made the old man much laughed at. He had in time come to be ashamed, and would talk no more of his fancies. The children brought home no more tales, and even the professor ceased to come on his visits to the Rookery.

Old Whipple often sat as he was now, looking intently at the dagger. Unquestionably he was engaged in one of those mental excursions which the neighbors explained so variously, and which he never attempted to explain at all. His vein-swollen, scaly hands clasped the edge of the table top with too much vigor for his age. There was something almost gnomish in the stooped posture of his body. His neck was craned forward in what must have been an aching position, and his short gray beard hung almost to the surface of the table.

But these physical conditions were of no concern to Old Whipple now. Physically he was unconscious of himself or his surroundings. He seemed to be merely the disembodied essence of his five senses, with perhaps a sixth sense, or a seventh, thrown in. To feel that the room in which he sat no longer existed gave him a strange exaltation. The room was not there—he was not within it. The Rookery was gone, with all its relics. The green Buddha was gone. Even the dagger upon which his eyes were fixed—and this was the strangest thing of all—was there and yet not there, for it took the form of a vision of people and places in which he himself was incorporated.

The vision was of old times. Strange folk peopled it. If Old Whipple had been a historian or an ethnologist he might

have identified them by their clothing and the manner of their speech, but this was of no concern to him. He understood their words perfectly, although to his waking ear he was certain their speech would be unintelligible.

He lived, as time is measured, a dozen years among these people, coming at last to the day when his young son, blinded with the passion of a sudden jealousy, seized a jeweled dagger and flashed it to the heart of his bride. Out of the eternity of agony that followed, Old Whipple emerged clasp- ing the dagger, dripping with its woman's blood, and staggered away with it to a room, to a table, in front of a rickety cabinet from the top of which leered a grinning, green Buddha. His eyes remained fixed on the dagger. All else was altered now, save the dagger alone. The strange folk were gone, the old time was vanished; he was sitting again in the little room at the back of his shop. He lifted one cramped hand from its fierce clasp on the table-edge, and ran a trembling finger over the blade of the dagger. The blood was gone. Only a stain of innocent corrosion marred the wicked polish of the metal.

Old Whipple sank back into the chair and anyone who had come upon him then would have been certain he was dead. But presently he started up and began fumbling for something in a drawer beneath the table. He pulled out a worn notebook, and grumbling feebly at the necessity, groped for a candle and matches. With a stub of pencil he wrote for a long time, sighing at his labor. When he had finished he read it over, evidently with satisfaction, and wrote at the top, "Vision of the Dagger, No. 6."

There was a strange pedigree written in the notebook. Old Whipple mused over it by the guttering light of the candle. He had begun writing on the day the dagger came into his possession. He put down first of all what was told him by the Hindu. The dagger was very old, said the Hindu, and had accomplished many deaths. It was possessed originally by a bad rajah who, through jealousy, killed his wife. After that whoever became possessed of

the knife did likewise. If the owner had no jealousy he became jealous, and in the end killed a woman. So it would always be, said the Hindu, for so great was the psychic force of jealous hate that had concentrated itself through centuries in this instrument, it was certain that not only would its possessor commit a murder, but that whoever attempted to break the destined chain of killings should himself be slain.

Old Whipple, of course, had not taken all this too seriously. There were plenty of such lying fakirs to deal with in the curio trade. But it was not long after he had jotted down the legend in his notebook that he had the first of his bloody visions concerning the weapon. He had another and another, and rapidly his attention to the Hindu's legend grew from the casual to the profound. Always in these visions he saw a place of ancient times. He was transported to far countries of which he was almost wholly ignorant. And always there was a drama that ran its varied course from birth to young-life and love, then to jealousy and hatred, and in the inexorable end to the dagger and the killing of a woman.

Though Old Whipple lived so much in visions of old times woven about his antiques, and these visions were very real to him—more real, sometimes, than the bitter tenor of his physical life—he never was quite sure, in his waking moments or when he was out among the visible realities, that there was anything more in his visions than mere fancy, or at worst the nightmare of a decaying and disordered mind. Still he could not keep the subject out of his thoughts. If there was anything in the Hindu's story, why didn't he, Whipple, kill some one with the dagger? Was it simply that he had no woman to kill, and that his great age had put him beyond the capacity for such passion as jealousy? He was perplexed, too, as to what he ought to do with the dagger. Should he destroy it, and thus settle the matter forever? Sometimes he was of half a mind to do it, but he was stayed by the reflection that if he believed in the legend enough for that he must accept as truth the remainder of

it, and be prepared to forfeit his own life in penalty for breaking the chain of murder. Well' he was ready for that. He was an old man, and useless; he would find it no great sacrifice. If he could only be sure—

At least Old Whipple was so far convinced, that under no circumstances would he have parted with the dagger. He would have felt that to be a crime. When the young woman had suddenly picked up the weapon that afternoon he had been seized with a panic. His imagination leaped to a vision of the dagger piercing its way to her heart's blood in the hands of the young man who stood with her, jesting about the green Buddha. He must make up his mind, soon, he reflected, as he shuffled feebly through the dark shop to lock up for the night. Something must be done—before anything should happen.

It was perhaps only the appointed destiny of the dagger that it should have been stolen that night. The burglar took many things—among them the scarabs—but there was none Old Whipple mourned as he did the jeweled weapon. He was affrighted; he shrank from his thoughts. It seemed to him—though on no account, probably, would he have confessed this—that the psychic force embodied in the dagger was great enough even to prevent the dagger's destruction. The wilfulness, the awful, perpetrating purpose of this force, bore him down to the point where he was scarcely in doubt of his insanity.

Old Whipple began to look at the newspapers. A boy brought him one daily, and he would read in a dreadful agony until he had satisfied himself there had been no murder of a woman, with a jeweled dagger. He neglected his business to make exhausting rounds of the pawnshops, seeking for the stolen weapon. He begged the police to assist him in recovering it, and the police looked at him narrowly, writing his complaint in a book, and thinking no more about it.

Then one day the thing Old Whipple had been waiting for was chronicled on the first page of the newspaper. A woman had been stabbed to death. Her husband, a man who was known to the police, and

who had once "done time" for burglary, was arrested, charged with the murder. It was said that jealousy was the cause of it. There had been a bartender rooming across the hall. The quarrel that resulted in the killing had concerned him, the police said, though the bartender proclaimed innocence. The paper gave considerable attention to the weapon, which had been plunged into the woman's heart and remained there when the police arrived. It was a dagger of strange design, with a jeweled hilt.

This news stabbed Old Whipple to the very soul. He felt that he, not the man who stole the weapon from him, was the murderer. He should have credited his clear visions. He should have destroyed the dagger when he had the opportunity. Now he must find it again.

So Old Whipple went to the police and pleaded with them. But they would not give up the dagger. They told him he was clearly out of his mind on the subject. Besides, they pointed out, the dagger must be present in court as an exhibit when the murderer was tried.

Old Whipple existed in a state of pitiful mental agony until the trial began. He was there in the court room from beginning to end of it. He even created a slight disturbance at one point, when the young prosecuting attorney, Hugh Holloway, rose before the jury to make his plea for a conviction, holding aloft the cruel dagger with its double crown of gems. Old Whipple had it in mind to plead for the prisoner, to say a word that would set things right. The man was guilty, of course, but he, too, was a victim; his legal murder by the hangman would be no less a murder by the dagger, which was the fiendish cause of all. He must try to make them understand, he must brave their ridicule. But when he tried to speak they silenced him—the rough bailiffs; and so that he might stay and hear all, he remained quiet.

But after the trial, even after the hanging, they would not let him have the dagger, these suspicious police. He brought money—all his hoard—but, though the sight of it moved them profoundly, they shook their heads. The dagger must be sold at

auction at the end of the year, according to the custom, and the money put in the fund for widows and orphans of policemen.

So Old Whipple had to content himself with living on among his visions and waiting for that time to arrive. He had to exert himself at his business so that he should not by any chance be lacking in funds when it came to the bidding. He must be ready to pay any price.

The day of the auction arrived, and he went in a palsied expectancy. He stood in the crowd of second-hand dealers, curio seekers, and morbid persons who for inscrutable reasons desired to possess weapons which had accomplished murderous death. One by one the knives, pistols, and revolvers were put up and carried away by the successful bidders. It was all over speedily, and the jeweled dagger had not been offered. As the ghoul crowd of bidders dispersed, Old Whipple went with trembling anger on his lips to the police captain who had been auctioneer. The captain laughed at him.

"The dagger? What would that be doing at an auction sale? Too valuable, old Shylock. But I don't mind telling you what became of it. I saw the chief give it to Holloway, the prosecuting attorney. Why shouldn't the prosecutor preserve the evidence if he wants to? And look here, old man, don't you go making a fuss about it. You won't get anywhere, unless it's to jail."

So Old Whipple got along home to his curio shop, and then as restlessly set forth again, this time to the office of young Holloway. He made a strange spectacle there, pleading almost with tears, for the jeweled dagger. He was pathetic, too, in his feeble earnestness, and because of the small heap of coin he poured with trembling hands from a ragged wallet, abandoning it with an appealing gesture on Holloway's desk.

Holloway felt a stir of sympathy for the old man, but he was not moved to give up the dagger. It was at home, and he was not sure but that his wife had taken a fancy to it. No, he could not part with it.

Old Whipple did not give up. He went

out to Holloway's residence, and asked to see the young Mrs. Holloway, whom he easily recognized as the woman who had picked up his dagger that day in the shop. But Mrs. Holloway would not sell the weapon, though he pleaded in such a manner as to arouse her pity. She could not sell a thing that belonged to her husband, she explained, without first consulting him.

As he left, Old Whipple caught a glimpse of the dagger, which lay gleaming dully on the library table. He was seized with an almost overwhelming impulse to grasp it and rush away with it. But he reflected that this would not do; even a child could catch him. He must leave that sort of thing to more certain hands.

So, his extremity inspiring him to unwonted craftiness, he sought out a certain individual from whom he had made occasional purchases of curios, concerning which he had been delicate enough not to ask too many questions. This person, under Old Whipple's direction, knocked that afternoon at the door of the Holloway residence. He was dressed in the uniform of a messenger, and handed Mrs. Holloway a telegram. There were charges to be paid, and she went into her room for her purse. When she returned, having discovered that the telegram was an unintelligible message from a person of whom she never had heard, Mrs. Holloway found the messenger in the library, near the table on which the dagger lay. She flushed with anger at the same moment that she was struck with the terrible thought that perhaps he was about to murder her. She felt, at least, that his aim had been to possess himself of the dagger, even though the motive was only theft. After he was gone, murmuring an excuse, and running all the way to the corner of the block, she thought of the possible connection between this event and the visit of Old Whipple.

Mrs. Holloway spoke of this to her husband when he returned home that evening, but he did not seem impressed. He was inclined to laugh at her for her fears.

Holloway, as usual of late, had dined uptown. He found his wife playing chess with the amiable Jim. He paused at the

library table, idly fingering the dagger while he apologized for his tardiness. His wife looked up with a smile, but when she saw her husband toying with the weapon, turning it over and over to catch the sparkle of the gems, a frown submerged her smile and she spoke sharply, instead of sweetly as she had intended.

"I do wish you'd keep that horrid thing in your own room," she said. "Or, better still, give it back to Old Whipple."

"Of course," he responded. "I will if it disturbs you."

"Oh, I don't mind it," she qualified, illogically, "but you seem to have become more of a sweetheart to the dagger than to me since you've had it. You fairly worship it."

Holloway laughed at this. Then he went over and kissed the arch of his wife's neck as she turned her face coquettishly away from him.

"Jealous? Is that it? And of a thing so inanimate!"

"Come, come, you two," interposed the amiable Jim. "This promised to be a real game, with me a winner for once, until the happy-wedded-life incident began. Thought you people were through with that lovey-dovey stuff I put up with so patiently before you were married."

"Oh! Beg your pardon, Lord Jim," smiled Holloway, going back to the library table and picking up an evening paper.

But Holloway did not read. He sat looking, instead, at the dagger. It exasperated him, for he felt it was becoming an obsession.

Occasionally he looked up at his wife and Jim, their heads bent over the chess board and a flush of quiet excitement in their cheeks. He was conscious as he did so of a resurgence of that unwonted feeling—the sense of jealousy he had experienced as he had stood that day in the Rookery, in the presence of this curious blade and of the green Buddha leering down on them all. He mused over this in a puzzled, interested fashion, as he felt consciousness of his obsession developing within him. From a vague notion it was becoming a fixed state of mind.

Holloway began thinking subverted

thoughts concerning his wife and his brother. He started, once, and almost cursed under his breath at such folly, such treason of thought, as a picture came up between him and the dagger... He saw himself sitting in his office, and Jim and his wife driving together in his car. He witnessed them stopping in a country lane to pick cherry blossoms, and standing together on a windblown hillock so close that wisps of her hair drifted across his cheeks. He saw Jim grow pale at a sudden emotion, and in a flash the vision was of his wife in Jim's arms, and Jim kissing her, passionately, and she yielding, returning his kisses....

This was such a vision as to bring Holloway upright in his chair, with an inarticulate sound in his throat.

"What, Hugh?" admonished his wife, without looking up. "Dozing again over your paper? You'd better go to bed. Then you won't snort like that when your head rolls over on your shoulder. Forgive me, dear, for laughing at you, but it is funny!"

Still Holloway remained in his chair looking at the dagger, reviewing swiftly all the events of his life as they touched the life of his bride. Mingled with the skein always was Jim, the useless, useful Jim.

Had he presumed too much upon woman's fidelity. This was a treasonous, poisoned thought, his reasoning self told him; yet it was in his mind, and he could not efface it. Coupled with this thought was another: Jim was in the house very often of late. He was not exactly a nuisance, because he was useful. He seemed to have no greater ambition than to manage a powerful motor car and to be agreeable to womankind. That was it: he was too agreeable. Moreover he was young, and a handsome rogue. His indolence made him an expensive chauffeur, yet he was an excellent one, and could be depended upon to take good and agreeable care of his brother's wife on those occasions when office work kept Holloway from household attendance. This had been the case even in pre-wedding days, when never a suspicion had entered Holloway's careless, confident mind concerning Jim.

Perhaps this was the trouble, the blame doubtless lay with Holloway himself. He left his wife too much alone. He ought to quit this accursed business of the law that so tyrannized over his time. Still, there was no reason for his wife to question his affection for her. The danger, after all, seemed to reside in the ever-present Jim. If it were not for him— But that would not excuse his wife, of course. If there were any guilt it was shared by them. In fact, she must be the chief offender from the very nature of things. Perhaps—but there were a thousand notions pressing upon him, a thousand suspicions, between his mind and the dagger gleaming with a dull fire in the softened electric light.

In spite of his efforts to seem natural he was cold to Jim when the chess game ended and Jim went home. He was strangely unresponsive even to his wife, who clung to him warmly, and questioningly, for a moment, as she, too, said good-night. He muttered something about a brief to go over, and remained in the library, seated at the table, turning over and over in his hands the cool-metalled weapon, and feeling curiously of its wicked point.

Holloway could not have explained, even if he had been able to recall clearly afterward, the processes of thought that led him at the end of two or three hours to turn down the lights in the library, and clutching the dagger, to go stealthily up the stairway toward his wife's room. He seemed to have one lucid moment after that—a moment full of revulsion and horror—as he stood at the head of the stairs and heard the point of the dagger scrape harshly against a metal railing. Then he opened the door of his wife's room and went in, tiptoeing toward the bed where she lay, the lines of her slim young body faintly traced among the covers by a dim light from the hallway. A passion and a demoniacal impulse stronger than mind, stronger than soul and body, filled his veins and lifted his clasped hand—the hand that held the dagger.

As soon as the lights had gone out in the library the man dressed in a messen-

ger's uniform pried open the window, and whispering to Old Whipple to stay outside, put one leg over the sill and carefully drew the other after it. He came tumbling back almost instantly at sound of the fear-choked outcry of a woman's voice, a sound that spread a sudden, irresistible terror through the silent house.

"Let's get out of this," he muttered, and without waiting for the old man he made off into the shrubbery. But Old Whipple did not follow. He pulled himself painfully through the open window, and stumbled against the library furniture until he found a door leading into the hall. Instinctively he sought the stairway, and with gasping haste clattered up the steps and along the hall to the doorway of the room where Holloway stood, a-tremble, looking from the figure of his wife lying motionless across the bed, to the dagger that still was clutched tightly in his up-lifted hand. Murmuring incoherently, the old man shuffled over to Holloway, took the dagger, and disappeared down the stairs as he had come.

After an indefinite period, during which Holloway swayed slowly back to consciousness, he went to the bed, and lifting his wife in his arms, kissed her lips, her cheeks, her hair. He pressed her to him with such violence that presently she sighed, opened her eyes, and murmured: "Oh, Hugh, what a nightmare! I dreamed you were going to kill me with the dagger."

The door of the Rookery was locked next morning when Holloway went there. He went again in the afternoon, taking with him a man who wore the badge of the police. Together they broke open the door, and went into the little room that served as Old Whipple's office. There they found his body, crouched in a wry heap. His head was crushed, apparently by the bronze Buddha that lay fallen at his side. It seemed that the great blow of an axe, aimed at the dagger—a blow that had broken the jeweled weapon in pieces, as well as the brick upon which it leaned—must have sent the feeble old man tottering against the cabinet, shaking down the grinning image from its insecure place at the top.

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ROOM "99."

BY FRANCIS WORCESTER DOUGHTY.



UST as there are old forgotten churches in New York, located in by streets, whose very names are known only to those immediately interested, so there are old-time hotels, once popular resorts and familiar to every one, but now far beyond the range of public recollection, and kept in existence only by the patronage of certain persons, whose peculiar interests wed them to the house.

Such a hotel, until quite recently, flourished on a prominent down-town street just off Broadway. Dry goods buyers would go there and nowhere else. The uninitiated wondered how the house could possibly maintain its existence, and yet it flourished, until one day the buyers, for some unexplained reason, suddenly began to give it the cold shoulder. That settled its fate. The house was pulled down, but it was only a type of many others, not a few of which are still in existence. One must be entirely familiar with New York, to know and recognize them. Persons thoroughly acquainted with all the ins and outs of the metropolis, are growing scarcer day by day, and it is doubtful if a dozen could be found, without special reasons for knowing, who ever

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heard of Benson's Hotel, for many years the favorite resort of schooner captains and stone men, whose business interests lay with the marble and granite yards at Corlear's Hook.

Yet until recently Benson's Hotel did a flourishing business on lower Jackson street, ground since cleared to make room for the Corlear's Hook Park.

All around it were tenements of the lower class, but on its immediate block a few of the old Quaker families still resided with here and there some prosperous German or Irish contractor sandwiched in between them. In those days Benson's Hotel was full every night with a line of guests who, if not laying claim to "Style," certainly had plenty of money to spend.

Late on one raw November day several years ago, Dr. Willard Wylde, a young M. D., who had just passed his matriculation, while riding from Port Jervis to New York on the Erie Railroad chanced to overhear some strange statements in relation to Benson's Hotel.

He was seated in the smoking-car, half asleep, with his head against the window and his hat pulled down over his eyes, when the train stopped at Middletown, and a stout, prosperous-looking man, evidently a drummer, entered the car and claimed acquaintance with the gentlemen in the seat directly in front of Dr. Wylde.

"What brought me up here?" Wylde overheard him say, in response to his friend's question after the first cordial greetings had been exchanged. "Why, I've been to the Middletown Insane Asylum to see poor Randall."

"Indeed," was the reply. "Is he any better?"

"No; nor never will be."

"Still raving about the lady with the green hair?"

"Just the same. Mysterious, ain't it?"

"Very, as I understand the story."

"Wonder if you know it as it really is?"

"Can't say. Heard he went on a terrible toot, was missing for weeks and finally turned up stark mad, and able to talk about nothing but this mysterious female with the green hair."

"You're dead wrong, my dear fellow. Randall, hadn't drank a drop in a year, and I know it. He had the misfortune to occupy room 99 at Benson's Hotel last May. I understand no one has ever occupied it since."

"And what may that mean?"

"Let me explain; that room is at the bottom of the whole business. For the last three years as many as six men who have occupied it have disappeared mysteriously during the night, in every instance their baggage being found undisturbed in the morning, not a thing missing but the lodger, who never in any instance, except in the case of Randall, has been seen or heard of again. It took the proprietor some time to grasp the situation, for months would elapse between these mysterious disappearances, and at first it was supposed that the missing man had simply made off for reasons of his own, though just how it is hard to determine, for I understand the door was always found locked on the inside, and the only window in the room is rather too high for a jump; but the hotel people know it now, and, as I said before, since poor Randall was found wandering about the streets mad, no one has ever been allowed to sleep in room 99, and I very much doubt if anyone ever will again."

Now to all this and more—for the conversation did not end here—Dr. Wylde listened with close attention.

The drummer's strange story produced on his mind a most powerful impression.

Willard Wylde loved mystery better than he loved the profession he had chosen, which, truth told, he did not love at all. Possessed of ample means, and under no necessity to practice, this young man had preferred the pen to scalpel and medicine chest. Perhaps he was a literary genius—at least, he thought so, for he had already written two novels—tales of mystery—published at his own expense, and was now at work on a third.

Mystery! It was Willard Wylde's pet word. A mysterious room in a hotel—a real mystery! The very thing! It must be investigated—it should be, and at once.

Then and there Dr. Wylde resolved to sleep in Room 99, Benson's Hotel, that very night.

He had to look in a directory to find the house, when the ferry boat landed him in New York, for he had never heard of it before, and when he found that it was located on lower Jackson street he had to look in the back of the big book to find where that was, for Jackson street was to him as much an unknown quantity as Benson's Hotel.

But Dr. Wylde saw other streets on the East Side of New York that evening, the very names of which were strange to him, before he reached his destination; for fatigued with sitting in the cars and being unincumbered with other baggage than a

small grip, he undertook to walk to Benson's, going through the notorious "Polish Jew Quarter," by way of Canal street to its junction with Jefferson, and thence by way of Monroe street to Jackson, where he found the house without difficulty, being guided by the bright light which burned above the door.

Dr. Wylde was one of those quiet, self-centered, determined young men who having once taken a resolve, never for an instant entertain the thought of retreat.

He paused in front of the hotel only long enough to take in its surroundings, the chill November wind sweeping bleakly up from the East river as he looked.

Certainly there was nothing mysterious or forbidding in the appearance of Benson's Hotel, which stood about midway on the block between two old fashioned brick houses, seemingly still occupied by private families. Alongside the door of the house toward the river was a doctor's sign. By the light of the hotel lamp Wylde read the name, Dr. Klix, the usual designation of office hours being below. On the corner beyond was a drug store, and directly opposite a livery stable with several tumble-down frame buildings on either side.

Such was the general appearance of the block. The hotel was decidedly the brightest spot upon it, and when Wylde entered and walked up to the desk he found that it was brighter inside than without, for a crackling wood fire burning in an open hearth, around which a number of plain, but substantial looking guests sat smoking, talking and reading, gave the office a decidedly home-like look, and this more particularly since this room and those which opened off from it, writing room, billiard room and bar were well kept and scrupulously clean.

"Can I have a room here to-night, sir?" asked Wylde, placing his grip on the counter.

"Certainly," replied the clerk. "Will you register?"

Wylde wrote a name in the big book. "I would like room 99 if you could let me have it," he quietly said.

The clerk shot a curious glance at him.

"Why do you ask for that particular room?" he inquired.

"A friend of mine who recommended me here occupied it two years ago. He told me it was a good room."

"Sorry, sir, 99 is engaged. I can give you 98, right opposite. Exactly the same kind of room."

"I should prefer 99."

"For any particular reason?"

"The reason I have named."

"You might ask the proprietor. I can't give it to you."

Wylde saw that he had reached the end of his rope. To ask the proprietor after having been thus emphatically refused by the clerk would be pretty certain to force him to show his hand—precisely what he did not propose to do.

"Oh, very well; it makes no difference," he said, carelessly. "Show me to 98."

It was now half-past eight o'clock. Wylde washed up, left his grip in the room, and went down into the restaurant on the first floor and ordered supper, which surprised him by proving uncommonly good.

At half-past nine he was back in 98 again, where he sat reading until midnight—reading and listening, waiting for the house to quiet down for the night, and as determined as ever to sleep in no room but 99.

Another hour passed. The house was quiet now. The lodger in 96 had long since retired; 94 appeared to be unoccupied, and no one had passed along the corridor since half-past eleven.

"Now is about my time," murmured Wylde, closing his book. "I think I will make a move on 99. Probably I shan't succeed in getting in, and if that's the case I'll stay here to-morrow night and try it again."

He softly opened his door, listened for a moment, and then stepped across the corridor, and still more softly tried the door of room 99.

It was locked, but the fastening seemed to be of the cheapest description, for the door rattled as he shook it. Wylde slipped back into his room, and took from his grip a piece of wire, which he used to clean the briar pipe, to which he was devoted. Bending this and applying it to the keyhole, he soon mastered the lock, threw back the door, and found himself looking into room 99, dimly illuminated by the moonlight which stole in through the window.

There was nothing unusual in the room; in fact, it was the very twin brother of 98, with its single bed, bureau, chair and washstand. The only difference was the window, which opened just beyond the rear wall of the adjoining house, and overlooked the river. As Wylde glanced out, he could see the lights on the Brooklyn shore, with a Williamsburgh ferryboat heading up stream for its slip at the foot of Broadway.

"This is all right. I stay here," thought the young man.

"No one need ever know it, and my curiosity may be gratified, although I doubt it, but at least I shall have the satisfaction of having humored my fancy, whether anything comes of it or not."

Again he returned to 98, put out the gas and brought over his grip, umbrella, hat and overcoat. Then lighting the gas in 99 but leaving it turned low, he shot the bolt on the inside of the door and threw himself on the bed, not to sleep, but to await for developments. Such at least was his intention and for perhaps an hour he faithfully adhered to it, part of the time on the bed and then when the sleepy fit came pacing the floor, then throwing himself on the bed again, which last he did once too often, for the drowsy god caught him when he least expected it. He never knew that he had lost himself until he was suddenly aroused by three sharp, distinct raps.

Wylde started up to find himself staring at a figure standing beside the bed.

A woman—a woman in white, young, of tall, symmetrical figure, a face surpassingly beautiful in its molding, and such hair—such astonishing hair!

It was a yellowish-green shade seen in that dim light, and had a curious sheen about it—Wylde could think of nothing but corn-silk as he gazed, half stupefied—of that and the ravings of poor Randall as described by his friend. The words flashed back upon his memory :

"Still raving about the lady with the green hair."

Wylde tried to pull his wits together to get up to say something, but her eyes were fixed upon him, and for his life he could not have removed his gaze from those eyes of hers, which seemed to shine like two lurid flames between the folds of that wondrous hair, brought down over the forehead and ears in a style strange enough then, but decidedly *a la mode* now.

"Come!" she whispered. "Come! You must come! Dr. Wylde, get up off that bed and follow me!"

Was it hypnotism?

That or something closely akin to it must have influenced Willard Wylde then.

She glided backward between the window and the bed with both hands outstretched toward him, and Wylde simply arose and followed her—followed through an opening in the wall the full size of an ordinary door, which he had not seen when he examined the room.

He knew he was doing it—he remembered everything—the

story of the mysterious disappearances in this room was uppermost in his mind as he did it. And yet he did it just the same and without the power to utter a word.

The instant he crossed the threshold the figure vanished and all was darkness. The spell was broken, but too late for a retreat. The panel behind him closed with a snap. Wylde heard it, but before he could turn he was suddenly pushed forward into a blaze of light.

Utterly confounded, Wylde just stood and stared.

He was standing, surrounded by iron bars which reached above his head, looking between them into what appeared to be a chemist's laboratory, with its crucibles and muffles, its flasks, beakers and bottles, all so familiar to him in his student days.

Just beyond the bars was a long bench, beside which stood an elderly man, with gray whiskers and bald shiny head, wearing a greasy dressing-gown, and busily shaking an orange colored liquid in a flask over an alcohol lamp. His back was turned to Wylde, and he seemed intent upon his work and wholly oblivious to the young man's presence, until suddenly placing the flask in a rest, he turned and faced the prisoner behind the bars.

And such a face! Cold, hard, stern, unyielding, not one soft line of sympathy upon it. German, perhaps; foreign certainly, but the voice spoke good English, when it said:

"Good-evening, doctor. I presume you are somewhat disturbed to find yourself in my laboratory. I am busy for the moment, working down this solution of bi-chromate of manganese. Just amuse yourself by trying to escape, until I am through. They all have to do it, and you may as well get through with it at once."

To do justice to Wylde's feelings, as this strange being turned from him, and again taking the flask in his hand, began shaking it over the flame, would be to attempt the impossible. Enough to say that his coolness did not desert him, now that the baleful influence of those terrible eyes was removed from him, Wylde's will was all his own.

"I have already tried the wall behind me," he quietly said. "If it is not made of iron it is of something just as hard; as for this cage I presume whoever made it intended that it should be secure."

"You are right," replied the old man without looking around. "Just a moment, doctor, and I will attend to your case; the precipitate is falling and it is necessary for me to watch the method

of crystalization. There! It is done. Now then, my friend! First, who am I?"

"Not knowing, I couldn't say," replied Wylde with the same studied calmness; "but may I ask how you know me?"

"Assuredly. I don't know you. I read your name on your grip in room 99. You chose to paint Dr. before it, so I assume that you *are* a doctor, of what I neither know nor care. It may be medicine, law, divinity, horses or corns, it is all one to me, you will serve my purpose just as well."

"And that purpose?"

"Young man, you are cool. Usually I have to deal with prayers, pleadings, terror, rage——"

"Enough. Come to the point, please!" broke in Wylde. "I know all about the disappearances in room 99. I undertook to investigate this mysterious business, and I seem likely to succeed; be good enough to explain as quickly as possible what your purpose is."

"My purpose," replied the old man, fixing his cold eyes upon Wylde, "is to investigate you."

"Your explanation explains nothing. Who are you?"

"To another I should not answer, but your frankness demands its equivalent. Look at me. I am Klix—the great Klix."

"Ah! The doctor next door. I saw your sign."

The old man stamped his foot in rage. "Saw my sign!" he roared. "Ha! And this is fame! Surely you can be no doctor. I am Klix—Klix, on the brain!"

"Stop! I remember! A dry German work in six volumes dated forty years back! You wrote that?"

"I did. It is my work. It is the only complete treatise on the brain ever published. Swedenborg's ponderous tome is mere child's prattle in comparison. Huxley——"

"Never mind about Huxley. Dr. Klix, I have heard of your work, but I never read it and probably never shall. Go on."

The old man gave a contemptuous sniff.

"It is not for such as you," he said, "but still I like you. I'm glad you have come. You are different from the others; to vivisect the brain of a coward, a fool, a drunkard or one afflicted with any other form of mental weakness is something I have already tried many times, but yours will be different. In your case I may succeed in finding the seat of the *ego*, the thinking principle, in other words, what fools and fanatics term the soul."

"Ha, my friend!" he continued, as Wylde stared at him be-

tween the bars, "your face pales and well it may. Know your fate! I want the upper half of both hemispheres of your cerebrum! I have immediate use for them, to work up material for the sixty-second chapter of my coming work on the human brain now approaching completion. I presume you will offer no objection to parting with this slice of your anatomy. If you are really a doctor you must know that should the operation be skillfully performed you will still live; muscular power will still remain to you; your intelligence will be sufficient to enable you to perform the offices of nature, to eat, sleep, find your way from one place to another and things of that sort. In short you will stand about on the plane of a well preserved idiot. You will become an animal, and all in the interest of science. One thing more; I shall administer no anæsthetic—such is not my purpose. I can best study your cerebrum in a state of high mental excitement; such a state as you are rapidly approaching now as you stand there with your eyes starting out of your head with horror grasping those bars which will not yield. Come! Come! Come to the operating table! The sooner the better! Come now!"

Higher and higher grew the pitch of his voice as he pronounced these concluding words.

He had not over described the sensations of his victim.

Horror uncontrollable had seized Wylde at last. He shook the bars and shouted out one frantic appeal for mercy—a despairing cry for help.

Useless! He knew it too.

He felt that he was dealing with a madman—an enthusiast—a crank.

"That's right—that's right! Work yourself up!" cried Dr. Klix. "Beautiful! Do it again! Shout once more!"

At the same instant he stamped his foot violently upon the floor, and a sudden and overpowering electric current shot through poor Wylde, racking him from head to foot, and reducing him to a state of entire unconsciousness. When a sense of his surroundings returned he lay strapped down upon an operating table, with the doctor standing beside a small stand upon which a lamp with a powerful reflector had been placed, the light striking full upon Wylde's cranium. By the side of the lamp lay numerous glittering instruments—knives of curious shapes, scissors, probes, etc., the uses of which the young physician knew only too well.

Wylde stared at all this dumbly. He could not speak.

But Dr. Klix could and did.

"So you have come to life again!" he began. "Good! You yielded to the shock beautifully. No kicking, no struggles—that's the animal—you are a man. The last one I had out of 99 made me no end of trouble. He even refused to die after I was through with him, so I let him go after his head was healed. I may let you go, or I may keep you here in this house to study the effect of my operation, or you may die. It really makes little difference which."

Then as Wylde did not respond, he went on :

"Before I begin and you lose your higher consciousness, let me satisfy your curiosity about that room. The Benson House was formerly a factory; it was altered into its present shape some years ago. I don't know who built that secret door, nor why, but I happened to find it, and I have utilized it to furnish me with living subjects. That, doctor, is the full explanation of the mystery of room 99."

It was explanation enough for Wylde. All chance of escape seemed to have passed, and as the young man lay there much of the horror of his desperate situation seemed to have left him. He found himself unable to think of it. He could scarcely follow Dr. Klix as he rattled on; his mind wandered back to his boyhood days; scenes and faces long forgotten seemed to flit before him; the room seemed filled with people, and among them his bewildered brain showed him the faces of many who had long been dead.

Now the doctor ceased to speak, and turned to the bench where Wylde had first seen him. Again the alcohol lamp was lighted, and a large flask containing a colorless liquid was placed in the rest.

For a moment Dr. Klix watched its ebullition and then seemingly satisfied turned his face toward Wylde and began to talk.

"The time has come," he said. "As soon as that flask thoroughly boils I shall proceed to the operation. The extraction of your cerebrum will be reserved until the last; my first move will be to examine the posterior corner of the lateral ventricle. Have no fear. I am able to perform this operation with perfect safety; you will surely recover from its effects. I am the creator of the great truth that the hippocampus minor is not peculiar to man as formerly taught. It was I who explained to Professor Huxley—heavens! It boils already—more than boils! What carelessness! I——"

He had seized the flask and attempted to raise it from the flames, but too late!

In the midst of his self-satisfied reflections the flask exploded ; its contents broke into flame and scattered right and left.

With a cry of profound agony Dr. Klix clapped his hands to his face and dropped like a stone, while Wylde, with staring eyes and wildly beating heart saw the floor, the bench, the heavy curtains at the windows and the clothing of the fallen man burst into a blaze.

At the same instant a scream rang out ; the door flew open and "the lady with the green hair" burst into the room.

"Father! Father!" she shouted. "Dead! Thank God! The day of this evil house is done!"

So much Wylde heard, so much he saw but no more, for in the same moment the break came.

Faint, or swoon—call it what you will—he knew no more until he found himself lying on a lounge in the back room behind the prescription desk at the corner drug store, with several men around him.

"He's all right," said one, as he opened his eyes ; "something falling from the burning house must have struck him."

"By the way," said another, "did you hear if Miss Klix got out all safe?"

"Certainly she did," was the reply ; "but the old doctor must have been dead before his daughter got into the room after the explosion—at least, she thinks so, but she had no time to investigate ; it was all she could do to get out alive."

Had she time to take him from the operating table and drag him to the street ?

Dr. Wylde always thought so, but he never knew, for he never saw "the lady with the green hair" afterward—never heard of her—never wants to.

When at last he left the drug store, having told a story according with the remark he overheard, he pushed his way through the crowd, with one hasty glance at the ruined house of Dr. Klix.

The Benson House was scorched, and the guests badly scared, and the next day it was reported in the papers that one of them was missing, the name given being the fictitious one Wylde had signed to the register.

But Wylde never explained ; he never even returned to claim his grip and let the clerk know that he still lived. He felt no further interest in the Benson House. He had solved the mystery of "Room 99."

BY TIME-LIMIT.

BY MORTIMER FELTENSTEIN.

I.



ENTLEMEN, there is something more than mere bluster behind my words. I am willing to stake one quarter of a million of American dollars on the soundness of my judgment. I repeat that I shall produce my son, a child ten years old, in comparison with whom the most skillful of you will be the merest tyros. If any of you have the courage to pick up the gauntlet I have thrown down, I am ready, within one hour, to place a certified check for \$250,000 into the hands of any responsible stakeholder that may be designated. What say you, gentlemen?"

The scene is the famous Occident Club, of San Francisco; a club whose membership list includes almost all the Western millionaires, bonanza kings and railroad magnates. Its palatial home is situated on one of the most fashionable streets of that city, and within its portals, nightly, there is wagered, lost and won, fortunes, which to express would require at least five figures. No game of skill or hazard known to the civilized world but finds the devotees willing to offer up sacrifice on its altar; no honored foreigner to whom the hospitality of the club is extended ever leaves disappointed in a desire to engage in his national game, whatever that might be.

On the evening on which the reader is ushered into this temple of opulence, a stranger presents himself at the door, and delivers to the President a sealed letter of introduction from a member, who is now abroad on a tour of the world. The letter describes him as an Indian gentleman of independent fortune, who is about to visit the United States in quest of novelty. "I met Mr. Myrrheli in Bombay," the letter goes on, "and I met him none too soon. I don't recollect much about the affair; it all happened so quickly that its details failed, I suppose, to imprint themselves on the wax of my memory. All I remember is going out one evening, and being set upon, in the shadows of a street lamp, by a gang of thugs. The next moment my throat

was encircled by an iron grasp ; the blood throbbed tumultuously in my temples ; and my eyes were blinking painfully at the scintillating glitter of half a dozen blades, flashing round my head. I've been in a good many hard places in my day, in the good old times of '49, but never before was I so near dying with my boots on. I was just about ready to surrender the ghost ; the steel was within an inch of my breast, when a pistol shot rang out so near, that my ears were momentarily deafened. There was a shrill shriek from one of my assailants, then the entire mob dropped me like lead and ran.

"The man that saved my life was Mr. Myrrheli, who, as my good fate would have it, happened along in the nick of time. I cultivated his acquaintance afterwards, as you may suppose ; he is a royal good fellow, despite the fact that he is an Indian, and a sport way down to his toes. From which series of facts as a premise, I deduce that you must make him welcome, for my sake."

The letter is characteristic ; and to the President, every line exhales the effervescent nature of his old friend Dumphrey. With such an Open Sesame, there is little fear that the door of hospitality will remain closed against the stranger ; on the contrary, all present crowd around him, anxious to shake the hand that has saved a brother's life.

The foreigner is about thirty-five years old, rather under-sized, dark-visaged, wiry ; with a sharp, thin face and high forehead, spanned by eyes of an intense blackness, looking into which a man feels as if he stands gazing into a stream of some atramentous liquid, whose depth is infinite. His face is clean-shaven ; and his thin, bloodless lips shut tightly over teeth whose immaculate pearliness causes them to gleam when he smiles, with an unpleasant lustre ; and this sinister effect is emphasized by a peculiar upward twitch of the lips when they expand in good humor. About his dress there is nothing remarkable, except that it fits his lithe form perfectly.

"Tremendously glad to know you, you know," for the hundredth time repeats young Dick Travis, who has recently been elevated to the social importance of a multi-millionaire by the lamented death of an uncle, "delighted, by Jove ! Say, Dumphrey must have felt creepy shivers running down his spinal column just about then, eh ? Well, I guess ! Have something ? Serves him right, anyway. Why in thunder does he have to go poking his nose into other peoples' countries for ? Why couldn't he stay at home and play poker like a sane man, eh ?"

Mr. Myrrheli politely confesses ignorance on this dubious point, observing in faultless English, and with but the slightest of accents, that the mental condition of a person who prefers to travel rather than play poker at home, is indeed inexplicable.

"Queer duck," whispers Dick Travers to a friend; "say, he looks the picture of one of those esoteric fellows you read about, don't you know; one of those occult chaps and Eastern adepts, who juggle their souls out of their bodies, and then travel through space, in astral form, to save railroad expenses. All the same, I wonder if he plays poker?"

"Why not ask him?" suggests his friend.

"Not yet; wait. But Jove, what eyes! Did you notice them? They stab right through a fellow, don't you know."

The stranger saunters through the spacious rooms, admiring the sumptuousness of the furnishings, and remarking the air of rigid exclusiveness that seems to pervade the atmosphere of the place. He finally stops at a table where several persons are engaged in a game of chess. The white host is managed by a keen-eyed, broad-browed, middle-aged man; whilst the sable army is under the command of several who play in consultation. It is obvious that the general of the white forces is more than a match for the combined strength of his adversaries. Myrrheli stands watching the vicissitudes of the mimic battle, smiling faintly now and then as the allies make a particularly weak move.

"Mr. Harding is a strong player?" he whispers to a bystander, with a note of interrogation in his voice. He has had an introduction to Harding in the former part of the evening.

"Strong player! He is considered one of the greatest chess masters in the world."

"Indeed! A member of the professional ranks, I presume?"

"Oh, no; he's worth ten millions if he's worth a cent; plays for the love of the game, you know. But I've heard it said by competent judges that he's a match for the best European players."

"Thank you." He now follows the game with increased interest.

"Mate in eight moves," announces Harding, whereat the allies look incredulous. Harding smiles, and the game is continued; but the eighth move sees the checkmate accomplished.

Jeffrey Harding looks up, and his eyes meet those of Myrrheli.

"Ah," says he, genially, "I see you have been watching our game, Mr. Myrrheli. Are you interested in chess?"

"Very much, indeed, but there my claims rest; I am but an indifferent player."

"You will pardon me if I decline to accept your word as to that. I should be delighted if you would allow me to judge for myself."

"Oh, certainly," smiles the Indian, "if you can afford to waste your time on such as I."

Myrrheli sits down, the pieces are arranged, and Harding gives the advantage of the move to the guest. There is a curious glitter of satisfaction in the Indian's eye as he pushes the king's pawn two squares. The game proceeds, but the American wins without apparent effort.

"Oh, but you must give me my revenge. I do not propose to allow you to demolish my forces so easily the next time," says Myrrheli, good-humoredly.

Harding bows assent. The result, notwithstanding Myrrheli's increased exertion, is the same.

"You see, I was right," observes the guest, lightly shrugging his shoulders and waving his hand to signify that the inevitable must be accepted. But after a moment's hesitation: "I think I know somebody whom you would have much more difficulty in overcoming; whom—er—in fact, I do not think you could—er——"

"I see," says Harding, with interest; "a compatriot of yours?"

By this time the room is well filled with members, who have been drawn hither by curiosity to witness the issue of the contest between their champion and the stranger. They believe Harding to be invincible. The Indian's words to them savor of impertinence.

"Well, yes," Myrrheli says in answer to Harding's question; "in fact, a son of mine."

"A son of yours?" raising his eyebrows. "He must still be quite young."

"He is—*he is not yet ten.*"

A moment of silence, and then a roar of laughter greets this announcement. That speech of his is not only impertinent, but stupid as well. Harding flushes.

"That's one on you, Harding!" cries Dick Travis, when the cachinnatory storm partly subsides.

"I beg your pardon," says Harding to the Indian, coldly, without deigning to notice the last remark; "did I understand you to say——" A wondering stare ends the question.

"Yes, sir—I said that my son, who is ten years old, will easily hold his own against you. I will go further, gentlemen," turning to the spectators; "I will say that there is not a person present in this room whom my son cannot defeat in a match."

Several shrugged their shoulders, as if to intimate that they will not attempt to explain the particular form of mental aberration from which their guest is suffering. Others smile in derision. At this moment Dick Travis steps briskly forward. He winks mischievously at Harding. He evidently intends to enjoy a little fun at the stranger's expense.

"Now that's a thundering big opinion to be responsible for, Mr. Myrrheli," he begins, punctuating every couple of words with an additional wink to his fellow members. "You see we Westerners out here have an unswerving faith in the eloquence of the yellow metal, and all our oratorical jobs we assign to this Demosthenes. He has a voice musical enough to charm ears that are deaf to Beethoven, and strong enough to be heard at the Antipodes. A vulgar fellow might express the same truth by telling you that 'money talks,' don't you know; and of course you, as a sport, are——"

It is now that the Indian rises, and without any apparent excitement, utters the words which open this story. There is an interval of astonished silence. This is more than Dick has bargained for. There can be no question that the Indian is sincere; his manner and tone are a sufficient guarantee of that. But two hundred and fifty thousand dollars! Who ever heard of such a sum wagered on the issue of a chess contest? And what a chess contest! A boy of ten opposed to one of the world's greatest players! Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars! Who is this man who speaks so lightly of risking a king's ransom on the skill of a child? An Eastern nabob to whom money is as sand? An Indian Monte Christo?

At length Myrrheli breaks the silence.

"So, gentlemen," says he, with a quiet laugh which nevertheless sends a thrill of exasperation through his hearers, "your Yellow Demosthenes has suddenly lost his voice, it seems. You are not inclined, I perceive, to repose any pecuniary confidence in your champion. Mr. Travis," turning to the latter worthy, and speaking very softly, "I do not suppose you intended to be taken seriously, so I——"

"By heavens!" bursts out Dick, "you can't ring in bluff on

us for genuine grit. I'll call your ante and force you to a showdown, you bet. If you've got the nerve to support your words by a roll of bank bills, then produce your infant phenomenon, and by thunder, I've got \$250,000 that say Harding 'll eat him up."

"Excuse me," puts in Harding, quietly, "but it seems to me that I'm the party most concerned. Mr. Myrrheli, if you are in earnest, I accept your offer."

"No, sir-ee," roars Dick Travis, "you can't freeze me out of this for a good deal. I was the first one to pick up this dough-nut, and whether it belongs to you or not, I want a share. Harding, I'll go you halves."

"Very well, that is a bargain, if Mr. Myrrheli is still of the same mind."

"I see no reason to change it," asserts the Indian.

"Then the wager is made; have you any conditions to offer as regards the match?"

"None; except that I should prefer a time-limit."

"Will twenty moves an hour do?"

"Perfectly."

"Have you no suggestion to offer as to the number of games to be played?"

"Suit yourself as to that."

"Then I propose a rubber of three games; two victories to win the match, draws not counting."

"That is satisfactory to me. Let me see; it is now twenty minutes of eleven. Do you see any objections, Mr. Harding, to settling our friendly little dispute to-night? I have certified checks amounting to the necessary sum in my rooms, and if you are willing, they, together with my son, shall be here within the next hour?"

"Oh, there are no objections to that from our side. Mr. Belvey, here, will act as stakeholder, if you have none else in mind. We, however, do not happen to have *certified* checks about us for the required amount. If you——"

"Don't mention it; any ordinary check, or your word of honor for that matter, is equally satisfactory. Good-night, gentlemen, I shall soon have the pleasure of rejoining you."

Curiously enough, no one at the moment thinks it at all singular that Myrrheli should have had certified checks for so enormous a sum without possessing any foreknowledge—as, indeed how could he—of the use to which they would be put.

II.

"Philoston, it worked like a charm."

"What! You haven't succeeded so soon?" in a tone of delighted incredulity.

"Completely. It all happened as we had planned. I allowed Harding to win a couple of games from me, and then nagged him and a fellow Travis into accepting a bet for \$250,000 that Harding could not win a match played against my son—*my* son; good, is it not?"

"You see, the letter of introduction allayed whatever suspicions might have been excited at the largeness of the wager. They believe that Dumphrey really wrote it for me in Bombay. He was the easiest subject I ever practiced on—a look straight into his eyes, and 'write,' I cry, and he writes."

"But Harding will not prove so tractable a subject. I know him. He is a man of iron will."

"Pshaw! What care I for that! Not for nothing did I pass the best days of my life among the Inner Circle of Adepts in the mountains of Thibet. I know my business. Besides, I have already told you—hypnotizing HIM will be only a last resource. I am confident that I am his superior as a player; I have defeated better men than he is. The suggestion of the boy as a part of the scheme was a stroke of inspiration. Had I offered to bet \$250,000 on myself, the natural answer would have been: 'My dear sir, we must know something more about your record as a player.' But who would hesitate to back a man like Harding against a ten year old boy? For how should they suspect that the child will be a mere living automaton as it were, to act the will of my intelligence?"

Not so long ago John Philoston had been an honored scion of an honored house, the acknowledged leader of his set. But wine, women—of the Lalun kind—and cards plunged him into a current of dissipation which held its victim in its frigid embrace, till it finally cast him on the reef of social ostracism. No man needs be moral; but all men must seem to be. When, therefore, tales of doubtful honesty began to assail the ears of society about its darling and prince, society was perforce compelled to shed the scales wherewith it had willfully blinded itself to his true character, and the edict went forth to "cut him dead." He was "cut dead," expelled from the Occident Club, of which he was a member, and then this leader of cotillions slid gradually down the decline of respectability, till at the time we meet him, his

fondest boast was that he was the most expert card sharp on the Pacific Slope.

A lucky season of plunging at the race course had made him temporarily rich; it was then that he chanced upon Myrrheli, doing a "turn" in a music hall in one of these mushroom mining camps, which disfigure the Far West like so many pock-marks. A partnership between them was soon formed and a plot soon concocted, whereby Philoston's money and Myrrheli's powers of diablerie might be jointly turned to profitable account. Dumphrey was then contemplating a tour of the world; hearing of this, Myrrheli managed to make his acquaintance, with the result already seen.

"Well, well," continues the Indian, "we are wasting time; where is the child?"

"Asleep."

"Then rouse him. Time presses. I promised to be back in an hour."

"To-night? Well, so much the better. Myrrheli, here are the checks. I trust you, you see; but—I rely on the fact that you know me. The child is in the next room. He will be ready in five minutes."

The boy is soon dressed—a poor, shrinking, trembling little creature, with a piteous look of persecution in his eyes, whom the schemers have bought from an Italian mother for a few dollars.

"Now, then, sonny," cries Myrrheli, roughly, "just look at me."

"Oh, please—please, father," comes from his quivering lips in broken English—they had commanded him to call Myrrheli father—"don't look at me like that. My—my head aches so after——"

Myrrheli bends down, and grasping the little fellow's chin, forcibly elevates his head till their eyes meet on a level.

A few moments thus, and the child's face becomes set, while his eyes assume a glazed, unnatural appearance.

"There, now we are ready. Hypnotism is a wonderful thing, is it not? Here's a child who doesn't know a king from a pawn, yet who will soon play chess with a skill which few masters, indeed, are capable of transcending. Come on, sonny; the carriage is waiting for us. Good-bye, Philoston. If I find Harding too strong for me, then—well, we shall see. Depend upon it, we shall be a quarter of one million dollars richer by the time you see me again."

III.

"So this is the prodigy, eh?" cries Dick Travis. "Well, if this bundle of dazed humanity can outgeneral Harding, I'm willing to lose my money."

The Indian bows coldly.

"Mr. Belvey has my checks," says he, "and yours, too. Now let us proceed with the business at hand."

Harding sits down at a table. There is a smile on his face which he vainly tries to suppress. He has decided, for his part, not to accept the money which he will win. It is hardly honest to gain where one ventures nothing.

"Sit down, sonny," says Myrrheli, turning to the boy. "This gentleman will play a game of chess with you; do you understand?"

"Yes, father," mechanically.

The board is prepared; and the move being drawn for, is won by Harding. A double stop-clock, of the pattern ordinarily employed in matches of this character, is placed in the center of the table. Myrrheli stations himself opposite the boy. No referee has been appointed; none is deemed necessary. The fifty or sixty members in the room group themselves so as to command the best possible view of the uneven battle.

Harding offers the King's gambit, which the child unhesitatingly accepts. At every move the boy glances up at his father, as if to seek in his face some token of approval; no one pays any attention at this. As the play continues, an expression of surprise diffuses itself over Harding's countenance. The child is certainly precociously clever. Of course, it is absurd to speak of equality between them, still—ah! the little beggar is spreading an elaborate net. Decidedly, he has a remarkable future before him; at the odds of a rook, the issue would be extremely doubtful. What! Another combination! A knight would adequately express the difference in their play. He is full of resources. Ah, at last! The little fellow has made a slip.

"Checkmate in five moves," announces Harding, sitting back in his chair.

Dick Travis' gaze falls on Myrrheli. Beyond a hardly perceptible pallor, there is nothing to indicate that he is affected by Harding's announcement; whatever his emotions, he holds them masterfully in leash.

The fifth move confirms Harding's statement; the boy has lost the first game.

The second skirmish begins. The boy opens with the Ruy Lopez attack. Of all openings, this to the ordinary player seems least attacking; but the child soon makes it evident that he understands wherein its potency lies. The spectators look alternately at the board, and at one another. Is it possible that this wee little creature successfully maintains the attack, despite Harding's strongest defensive moves? As for the latter, the expression on his face has become almost ludicrous in its profound astonishment. A knight! He can no more give the odds of a knight to this boy, than he can give it to Steinitz. Wait! What means the last move? Good heavens! There does not appear to be any way of escaping checkmate except by sacrificing two pieces. He must think.

He glances up at the clock. But ten minutes to make the next seven moves. There's no time to analyze the position. The two pieces must go.

He pushes a figure, which has the effect of losing a knight and a bishop.

"Aha!" whispers Travis to a neighbor, "I'll bet he has a gilt-edged combination up his sleeve; but the kid's a dandy."

Travis is mistaken. By several cogent moves, the child compels the exchange of queens, after which his superiority of force enables him to win another piece and, finally at the twenty-eighth move, to announce checkmate.

"Well, I'll—be—d——!" ejaculates Travis. A prolonged sigh that is almost a whistle quivers through the audience. Harding flushes. He feels unexpressibly humiliated.

When the third and deciding game begins, there is visible a tense look of excitement on the faces of the on-lookers to this remarkable exhibition. The smiles of derision are no more. In their place have come an expression of absorbing curiosity and intense interest. The room is cool and perfectly ventilated, but on the brow of more than one, the beads of perspiration gleamed like the early morning dew on the forest brambles. There is an involuntary movement to crowd nearer to the table as Harding makes the opening move. Myrrheli stands quiet and confident. He had made a fatal miscalculation in the first game; but the second truly showed the relative strength of the players. Perhaps, after all, there will be no occasion to call his reserve powers into operation.

Harding's fourth move resolves the game into the Evan's gambit attack. The American has frequently defeated Tscha-

gorin himself at this opening, and when the child accepts the sacrifice pawn, Harding feels confident of victory. The onslaught he institutes is terrific, but in vain thunders his batteries. The grand diapason of battle swells not louder from his ranks than from the ranks of the enemy. Shot is met by shot and stratagem by stratagem. Each plays slowly, warily, deliberating over every move, pondering the consequences of every variation. Myrrheli's eyes are glued to the board; not for a moment do they leave it. \$500,000 depend on the issue of his game!

The end of the first hour's play. So far, no advantage is discernable on either side.

With every move the excitement of the audience is augmented. Unconsciously one grasps another by the hand and both press till the blood leaps to the nails.

Harding is playing his strongest. He has discarded the notion that he can offer odds to this marvelous little fellow, with the set expressionless face of a wax figure and the brain of a dozen Morphys. It is even doubtful, he confesses, whether, by playing his best, he can do better than draw. If he comes off victor, he will accept his winnings.

But wait! Let him think! Is there not a break in the ranks of the youthful general? The child's last move was weak and—yes there is an opportunity for brilliant play. But he must first consider; a false step may prove irretrievable. Is the combination sound? No—yes—no—; it all depends on the child's next move. Will he see the danger in time? By Heavens! He doesn't!

Harding looks up. He has won. No earthly skill can save the game. Of that he is confident.

His eyes rest on the clock. He has time to spare. One after another he sacrifices first a knight, and then his queen; in exchange he takes one bishop, but he has secured a position wherein he can force checkmate with the residue of his pieces.

Harding perceives Myrrheli glancing at the clock, and follows the direction of the Indian's eyes.

"Four minutes to make the next four moves," Harding mentally notes. "More than enough. The moves are already determined. Altogether they cannot consume two minutes. On that fourth move, too, the checkmate will be an accomplished fact."

He so announces aloud.

Myrrheli's face has become livid; but he is very cool. He gazes intently into the child's eyes, and the latter's lips move for the first time during the match.

"Play!"

"Oho! You will fight to the last, my little bantam, eh? Very good!"

The next move is made. Myrrheli tries to attract Harding's attention, but fails. Another move, and the third follows.

"Checkmate on the next move," says Harding.

Again the single monosyllable from the child:

"Play!"

Harding stretches forth his hand to touch the mating piece. Suddenly some solid object falls to the mosaic floor, causing a loud noise. Myrrheli, in changing his position to the other side, has dropped his heavy cane. Harding starts and looks up. He detests noises. Myrrheli's eyes are staring full into his. What peculiar eyes! He must have been in error when he had mentally characterized them as black. Now a dull, reddish fire lies smoldering in their depths.

He moves uneasily in his chair, but so fascinating are those burning orbs, that he neglects for the moment to finish his play.

Harding is distinctly conscious of a wish that Myrrheli would remove his eyes from him. The wish becomes stronger every instant. It never occurs to him to change the direction of *his* eyes. In the meantime the clock ticks the seconds away. But ninety seconds of the hour are now left.

"What the deuce is he waiting for?" mutters Travis, his voice husky with suppressed excitement.

And in truth, that is the question which agitates the mind of every person who has witnessed to-night's extraordinary exhibition. What is Harding waiting for?

The precious moments are melting away into eternity. But one minute left; and Harding seems unconscious of the flight of time.

Suddenly, however, a gleam of recollection penetrates the cloud-curtain of his slumbering will. He strives to break the strange, lotus-like charm that has enthralled his powers of volition. His hand goes forth an inch—two inches—hovers for a moment over the board like a frightened bird, seeking fearfully some haven of rest, and then—heavens! Those fiery eyeballs have shaped themselves into needle-pointed daggers, and are stabbing deep, deep into his brain. Pain, a far-off, spiritualized pain, whose seat seems an infinite distance away, quivers through his head for a moment. Then everything becomes confused: the individuality of surrounding objects are merged in a general in-

definite mass, and the scene before his eyes gradually recedes from view, the outlines become fainter and fainter—smaller and smaller.

With a spasmodic jerk Harding rests his head on his elbow, and with furrowed brow begins to study the positions. What can he be thinking of? But thirty little winged messengers of grace remain for him. The \$500,000 are already his; he needs but stretch forth his hand to take them. Is the man bewitched? Impatiently the tiny angels, one by one, soars swiftly away to the Infinite Past; but Harding pays no heed.

A silence almost palpable has fallen on the large hall. All are lost in wonder. But ten seconds left!

Travis can endure this no longer. His palms open and close convulsively, while his brow is suffused with a cold moisture. He draws a long breath, and raising his voice till the room rings with the awakened echoes, he thunders:

“For God’s sake, Harding, *move!*”

He knows that he ought not to have done this, but what cares he? Harding looks vacantly up, and resumes his contemplative attitude.

The seconds drop one by one in the hour-glass of time, now are left eight—now five—four——

“Move, *move*, d—— you, *move!*”

Two only are left—one——

Travis gives one agonized look at the clock.

“*My God, lost by time-limit!*”



From the Borders of Devachan.

BY SALLIE F. TOLER.



THOSE who are interested in Archaeology, will remember the private expedition sent out to Mayapan, (El Pendos de los Mayas), in 18—, by the directors of the Metropolitan Art Museum, equipped and supported by Erastus Millman, the antiquity loving millionaire of New York.

The report of a rich field in a comparatively unexplored district, together with the hope of important discoveries bearing on Millman's favorite theory, the identity of the ancient Mayas with the primitive Asiatic races, led to the fitting out of the party.

But that which interests those who keep posted on the latest discoveries from buried history, is to know what became of the remarkable "find" which the party reported, accounts of which were published under flaming headlines, in the daily newspapers.

This is a copy of the original dispatch sent to Erastus Millman from Merida:

"TO ERASTUS MILLMAN, New York:

"We ship from Merida on Wednesday, for New York, bringing with us some of the most remarkable discoveries yet unearthed, among which is the mummy of a *tlatoani*, or Mayan noble, in a most complete and life-like state of preservation.

"Signed, HENRY LANGDON."

The newspaper accounts of this discovery were all the public ever heard of it. If any inquisitive archaeologist made more particular inquiry he was put off with vague promises and rather ambiguous explanations.

Here is a true story of the whole affair, beginning with the daughter of Erastus Millman.

Julia Millman was perhaps the most thoroughly educated woman of her age in New York. Since her father had been assured of certain fortune, he had devoted himself to two things, his passion for research in archaeology, and in training his only daughter, that she might be as enthusiastic a student of antiquity as himself. She was twenty-six years old, and could read and speak nine different languages.

With her father, she joined in the various exploration parties

from different parts of the world, and had gone with him wherever the secrets of the past are being torn from the heart of the unwilling earth. She was with the expedition of 1887, which discovered the Great Temple from the Mound, *Tell el Yahuduyeh*, one of the romances of Archaeology.

The sole reason why they had not accompanied the party to Mayapan was because Erastus Millman had been unaccountably attacked with gout, a thing which he could not account for, seeing he was of most abstemious habits in spite of his great wealth. In fact, both father and daughter lived in a manner more belonging to an humble book-keeper than to a multi-millionaire.

True, they spent money—plenty of it—but not for fine clothing, jewels, costly food or expensive establishment. They lived in an unpretending brown-stone front on East Forty-Seventh street, which was crammed from cellar to attic with treasures dug out of the ground.

There were mummies from the pyramids of Egypt, from the graveyards of Peru, and from the lava-encrusted Pompeii; there were manuscripts, in parchment and stone, from the remotest depths of India, and bronze cats from the “Cat Cemetery” of Bubastes; there were torques, armlets and beads, wrought in gold, from the bronze period, and pottery, bronze swords and shields from the same age; there were statuettes and bas-reliefs from Calamis, Phydias and Polycletus. A part of their possessions were in the Metropolitan Museum, besides the many gifts and loans in the Smithsonian Institute and other important museums.

Julia Millman was engaged to be married to Herbert Elmore, a civil engineer, who had gone out to Mayapan with the exploring party.

Elmore was thirty, and had made considerable progress in his profession. He was very much in love with his fiancée, who received his affection in a calm, impassive way, which caused her friends to say of her:

“Julia Millman’s loves and friendships are as undemonstrative as her father’s mummies; they smell of the catacombs.”

On the day of the party’s return from Central America, boxes containing the collection had been brought to Millman’s house, and Julia and her father were awaiting the arrival of Elmore, and Henry Langdon, the Metropolitan director who had sent the telegraphic dispatch, to open and examine the contents.

Presently they were announced, and Herbert Elmore took his

fiancee in his arms before them all, but half pleased at her ill-concealed impatience to get at the work in hand.

"You are not half so anxious to see me, as you are to open these boxes," he said, reproachfully. "I feel that I shall grow madly jealous of this Aztec fellow, even if he has been dead five hundred years."

"You silly boy," smiled Julia, "of course I am glad to see you; but this is a Mayan," she corrected, "not an Aztec; they are two centuries later."

Several of the smaller boxes were opened first, and the contents bestowed on shelves, previously to a descriptive labelling. When at last the box containing the remains of the tlatoani was opened, Julia and her father could scarcely restrain their impatience while the straw and palm leaves with which the figure was wrapped, were being removed.

"Prepare yourselves to be startled," said Elmore. "I believe it is the most remarkable 'find' on record. There is no shrinking away of the tissues. The whole body seems to have been preserved in some wonderful way."

"There was a method of preservation of the dead," said Millman, always ready to harp on his favorite string, "among the ancient Hindoos, which was known only to the Yoghis, but said to be shared by them with the keepers of the Egyptian Rites and Mysteries."

"But this is a Central American Indian," said Langdon, the director.

"No matter, their origin is the same. The original peopling of America dates from the time there was continuous land between this continent and Asia," returned Erastus Millman.

A cry of astonishment burst from the group when the figure was at last exposed to view.

The body of this ancient inhabitant of Central America lay in his rough coffin, looking as if he had died but yesterday. The handsome, and but faintly copper-colored face, wore an expression so benign, so near to a smile, that he appeared rather to be sleeping than dead. The heavy black hair drooped across a smooth, noble forehead, which was broad and high, and not flattened, as has been proved the custom from the numerous bas-reliefs and remains of mummies found at Palenque and Uxmal, and swept clinging round his neck like folds of satin. The brows were finely arched, and the lashes lay lightly on the high cheeks. The well-shaped hands, held close to the sides, were perfect.

"This is incredible!" exclaimed Elmore. "It is even more life-like than when first exhumed. My God!" he gasped, in consternation, dropping the hand he had taken in his, "it is flesh!"

"And what did it appear to be at first?" asked Millman, trembling with excitement, and forgetting his gouty foot, to kneel beside the box.

"Stone, or some similar substance," answered both the other men in a breath.

"We have been swindled," said Langdon. "Someone has substituted a real body for our find at Mayapan."

"Impossible!" returned Elmore. "The boxes have never been out of my sight except from the Pennsylvania depot to this house. It is the same. See this!" and he lifted the long, loose sleeve that hid the wrist, and showed a bracelet of large pearls with a pendant of onyx.

"Indian pearls!" pronounced Millman, more excited over a possible "clue" than over the extraordinary appearance of the body. "The carving on the pendant is Indian, too!"

The longer they looked, the more grew the illusion that the Mayan noble was not dead, and when Millman, removing the outer wrapping, applied his hand to the region of the heart, there was not even a smile.

"What are we to do?" asked Langdon. "We should be mobbed if we set up an object like this in the Museum and claimed that it had been dead five hundred years."

"We must wait," returned Millman. Then he bent over the body and examined the nostrils closely.

"I was sure of it," he said in triumph; "the man is not dead; it is a case of suspended animation."

"What! For five hundred years?"

"This composition which fills the nostrils," he went on, removing as he spoke a substance that looked like a red paste, "is *mantra*, used by the red cap lamas of Thibet and the Buddhists of Mongol, when they voluntarily undergo a cessation of animation and allow themselves to be buried for thirty, forty or sixty days."

"But surely you do not credit these idle traveler's tales?" protested Elmore.

"I have no motive in telling 'idle traveler's tales' myself," returned Millman, somewhat coldly; "both my daughter and myself have witnessed the feat more than once. At Agra, an Indian Yoghi was put into a cataleptic state by another Yoghi,

and buried for thirty days. We saw him buried and exhumed again after the wheat had grown over his grave, which was watched night and day during the period."

Julia had uttered no word all this time. She stooped, awed and speechless, gazing at the beautiful face, which for some reason appealed to her, not as an archaeologist, but as a human being. At length, she rose to her feet, and said to her father:

"If you think it is as you say, it is your duty to do all you can to resuscitate him. You know how they do it," she added in a whisper.

Her father looked grave.

"It was a knowledge almost fraudulently obtained," he said, "and I promised, only in an extreme case—but this is an extreme case."

"The fact is," continued Millman to the others, "I must be alone with my subject for the experiment."

"Oh, but, I say——" began Elmore.

"We cannot place this 'find' in the Museum," insisted the old man, "no matter what we have promised. So it will remain here, anyway, until further developments. Meantime, our dinner is already delayed until I am afraid to meet my housekeeper."

Langdon took himself off, after having been sworn to secrecy, and Herbert remained to dine with his sweetheart.

To tell the truth, Julia Millman tried to meet her lover's caresses half way, that evening, but she was strangely absent, and it was with shame that she acknowledged to herself a feeling of relief when he took his departure.

Left to himself, Erastus Millman, armed with an electric battery and some rolls of old parchment, locked himself in the room with the strange presence, turned on the bright lights of two incandescent lamps, and commenced his work.

First, he examined the rolls of parchment, and having found what he sought, laid it down face up on the table, with a foot from the tomb of one of Rameses', to hold it in place. Then he removed every trace of the *mantra* from the nostrils, and all obstructions from the ears. He next proceeded to turn the body over on its face. It was rigid as stone, but not so heavy.

He adjusted the battery, and applying one end of the coil to the cervical vertebrae, and the other to the heart, he waited.

No sense of the ridiculous pervaded these endeavors. It was little difference to Erastus Millman, whether the man had been

dead for five hours, or five hundred years, besides, the unaccountable life-like appearance of the body, warranted a trial.

For two hours he used the battery, applying it to various vital parts with no visible result.

Then he turned the body back again to its original position, and studied the parchment once more. From a cabinet in the corner of the room he took a substance with which he drew a double pentagram on the floor, the lines enclosing the box. A slight luminous blue vapor arose following the lines, after he had stepped inside.

Taking the stony hands of the Mayan in his own, he placed his thumb to those of the dead hands, and repeated in Sanscrit these words :

“Oh, Brahm, release the vital spark which once animated this body, and allow it to come back to its own. Oh, Brahm, unless that atom animates another, send it to take its own—so long bereft.”

Making the mesmeric passes from the head to the feet, he extended himself upon the body heart to heart, and put his lips, breathing and warm, to the lips so long silent.

“Thou Infinite breath, Dhyani Buddha, emanation of the great Brahm, intercede with thy great source, that this cold temple of stone may be animated again with the warmth of the glowing bosom of Eternal Sun.”

It was in vain. Neither the compelling force of science nor the adjurations of magic availed. There was no more sign of life than at first.

At length, exhausted and half dead himself, Millman gave over his efforts. He removed all traces of his task, turned out the lights, and went to his own room.

As he was about to enter his door his daughter came across the hall and stopped him with a question.

“It is useless ! It is too late—five hundred years too late ! Let me go ! I can endure no more !”

Julia stood for a few moments in deep thought, then she went back into her room, and threw about her shoulders a long, dark cloak that hid her white dressing-gown, and walked swiftly down-stairs, and into the room where the mysterious mummy lay.

Without the least tremor she turned on the lights and locked the door behind her.

Kneeling beside the box, she gazed long and earnestly at the

dead face. What nobility and strength was expressed there. What a pity that so perfect a specimen of manhood should be senseless clay, while so many unworthy——

Her thoughts fell unwillingly on Elmore, and she remembered with a feeling of repulsion his rather sharp and not handsome face and his undersized body. This man must have been an ideal of stalwart strength and virile beauty.

What was the secret of his miraculous preservation? Could it be really death? She leaned across until the soft brown tresses of her loosened hair mingled with the ebon locks of the Mayan.

A sort of madness took her.

“Come back, god-like man of the past, or take me where your spirit wanders in the invisible. Oh, why do I live too late to know thee?”

Her eyes fell on the parchment, which her father in his fatigue had forgotten. She sat down at the table and studied it closely. A note in later Sanscrit impressed along the uneven edge of the manuscript caught her eye.

“And I, Sron Tsan, do add to these instructions herein preserved, that all is not told. When it may be that the spark of life is vanished so far away that Brahm himself is powerless to recall it from the borders of Devachan, then I, Sron Tsan, say it is well to call on one of the Dara-Eke, the Glorious Mothers, who represent devine vengeance and devine love. If hate animate the soul, it shall be Okken Tengri, the terrible; but if it be love, then let the suppliant kiss the lips of the deserted body, and call upon Kwan Yin.”

Julia dropped softly to her knees again and pressed her lips, warm and living, to the mouth, cold and unresponsive for centuries.

The words came to her without effort or study.

“Oh, divine personification of Avalokites Vara, come to the aid of thy daughter who, of old, was faithful priestess in thy temple. Restore me this life, or take me to dwell with him in that Eternal Lumanae, that holds the uncompleted soul.”

A warmth seemed to grow under her lips, a faint perfume emanated from the body, and the cheeks took on a living hue.

The breast, under the folds of yellow cloth that constituted the sign of Mayan nobility, heaved tumultuously, then settled into a regular healthful movement. A rich red crept into the lips, and forgetting all else but her delirious love, Julia kissed them passionately.

Presently the eyes opened wide, and returned her look of compelling adoration, with an answering smile of comprehension.

She clasped her hands and hung over her treasure snatched from the tomb of centuries, with silent ecstasy. Long they gazed into each other's eyes, while the mysterious qualities of life, so long absent, rallied to the fast quickening body.

A subtle correspondence of thought, vague and dim, yet strangely familiar, was exchanged in that lingering gaze.

"I have come," he said, and oh, joy, in a dialect of high Hindustani, which she understood perfectly.

"And you will stay?" she breathed.

"Perhaps; for a time, at least. I know not, tender white maiden, who thou art, nor why I am here amid these strange surroundings, but the gods doeth all things well. Was it Ixmal who awakened me? And is the time, the forty hours expired?"

"No, it was not Ixmal; it was I. But tell me who thou art?"

"Surely, everyone knows Kabah, third son of the house of Tsal. But I am bewildered and confused, and you are strange to me. Where am I? And who are you, with the tender, pitying face of a mountain lily?"

"I am a stranger, and thou art far from thine own land. Thy unconsciousness, instead of lasting for forty hours, has endured for as many centuries as there are beads broidered on the altar-cloth of *Tlazolteotl*." *

Kabah, of the house of Tsal, sat up and gazed at Julia in astonishment, then made a movement of instinctive modesty as the yellow robe, decayed with ages, fell away, leaving his breast uncovered.

"How do you know this secret of the goddess of pleasure—you a young woman, and pure?"

Julia took off the long, black mantle which she wore and wrapped it about the shoulders of her strange companion.

Then she told him of the years since the land of the Mayas was overrun by a savage conqueror from across the sea, its gentle people exterminated, or fused into that of the subduing nation—of the flight of time and the destruction of his once proud country, now known only by the study of its ruins. She told him of the expedition to Mayapan, and of her father's belief and efforts and failure.

Then she told him how she had invoked the aid of Kwan Yin, the divine virgin, to help her.

* *Tlazolteotl*, goddess of pleasure, worshiped by courtesans, whose altar-cloth was embroidered in five hundred beaded points, emblematic of the five hundred broken vows of chastity.

"How say you? Kwan Yin, the name of one of the traditional gods of my ancestors from out of the West? See, this bracelet of pearls I wear is from that land. This pendant of onyx is graven with the name of Kwan Yin. I have ever thought her a myth, as were other gods of the strange peoples.

"And am I, of all my race, left living, far from my father's land, from the temple of our gods? Why have you recalled me to a world where all is strange?"

As he turned reproachfully to Julia, his eyes softened with a look of ineffable tenderness.

"The spirit knows no fetters," he said, "the gods themselves are not stronger than love, and my soul hath answered thine own; is it not so, my own, my mate for eternity, my twin soul who has summoned me hither? Was it not the ardent longing of your love that called me from the invisible?"

"But my spirit would illy fit my body now, and I know that I may not remain. But thou, art thou ready to follow, my love, my sweet?"

"I am yours, only yours," murmured Julia, in a voice stifled with emotion. "If it may not be in life, then yours in death."

"There is no death," answered her lover with a strange smile. "Am I not proof of the Everlasting?" and he clasped her close in his arms.

At half-past eight o'clock Erastus Millman came into the room. The body of his daughter Julia knelt, half embracing the box which had held the remains of the dead Mayan. The box was empty now, and as Millman lifted the long dark cloak which lay inside, a subtle, impalpable dust arose, and filled the room with a faint violet color, and an odor of incense.



A MEMORABLE NIGHT.

BY WM. H. SANFORD.



ONE morning the head of our firm remarked :

“Mr. Wolcott” (my name, by the way, is James Wolcott), “I want you to go down to Parkville and take those depositions in the Leonard case. You can catch the night express back, or you can stay until morning.”

In the course of a year many people travel to Parkville, but when they arrive there they are so disagreeably impressed by the place that they rarely ever stay. I remembered in a vague sort of way that Parkville had come into notoriety for a day or two a few years ago through reason of a hotel fire, in which at least one man had perished so successfully as to justify the newspapers to use the word “holocaust” in reference to the fire. However, that need not alarm me, as I intended to return on the night express. I like to travel at night. There is such a comforting, ghost-dispelling sound in the snores of my fellow passengers.

But fate was against me. My business indeed was quickly and easily despatched, and at 9 o'clock I was at the station, only to learn that a serious washout was reported up the road, and that all trains had been abandoned for the night. There was no help for it, so back I went to the hotel, the only one in the town, which suggestively enough was called the “Phoenix.” The landlord took a cheerful view of the situation, as was perhaps natural. He gave me the best drink at the bar, which was bad enough, and the best room in the house, which was not so bad. Then he settled himself down and kindly told me, with much local pride and satisfaction, the harrowing details of the holocaust before mentioned.

“And after the ‘Cosmopolitan’ had burned down,” he went on, “the citizens clubbed together and helped the railroad put up this fine fireproof hotel, which they called the ‘Phoenix,’ after the bird that rose from its ashes. Pretty idea, and something new, don’t you think?”

I admitted both beauty and novelty, and went up to my room. It was the ordinary country hotel bedroom, with a musty

smell and a blind that creaked most dismally. I stopped the creaking by taking off the blind, and I mitigated the smell by throwing open both windows. I had impressed upon the landlord the importance of calling me at the first alarm of fire, and given a man I took to be the porter fifty cents to jog the landlord's memory if he overlooked this detail in a moment of excitement. Then I threw my clothes on the chair—I am careless about my personal attire—put my watch, pocket-book and revolver under the pillow, commended my soul to Heaven with unseemly haste, and jumped into bed.

I am a light sleeper—another result of a nervous organization—and the circumstances under which I was sleeping, in a strange bed and in a strange town, were not likely to deaden my slumbers. What awoke me I cannot say, but my first recollection is that of sitting up in the bed, holding my pistol in my hand and looking with considerable astonishment at the dim outline of a man apparently stowing away clothing in an ordinary gripsack. That the man was a burglar, and that he was taking unwarrantable liberties with my possessions, I had not the slightest doubt. My calmness under such trying conditions surprised me. I remember experiencing actual pleasure in cocking and aiming my revolver. The click of the lock alarmed him. He turned hastily, and said in a tone so thin that it seemed to come from a great distance :

“Here ! Don't shoot, please !”

Enough light came in through the window from a lamp across the street to enable me to see the fellow more closely as he turned. He was appallingly thin, the merest shadow, in fact, with sunken cheeks and the glowing spectral eyes that Mary, my good nurse, had told me about thirty years before. I saw at once that he was no match for me physically, and it was plain that he was unarmed. So I said facetiously :

“You are not built for your calling, my friend. You would do better as a ghost.”

And the reply came, mournfully and hollow : “I am a ghost.”

“You'll excuse me,” said the ghost, “if I go right on with my packing—but time flies.”

“Pardon the bluntness of the question,” I answered, feeling under the pillow for my watch and pocket-book, “but in the pressure of time are you not packing up any of my things by mistake?”

“If you knew anything at all about spirits,” said the ghost, carefully brushing and folding a coat, “you would know that

they are strictly and invariably honest, and were never known to appropriate any article not belonging to them."

"Thanks," said I, considerably relieved by the assurance. "Now may I ask who you are, and to whom I am indebted for this unexpected pleasure?"

The ghost glided over to the washstand, gathered up a toothbrush and a cake of soap and tossed them into the bag. Then he answered :

"It doesn't matter who I am. I was William Wiggins, and all of me that was mortal was burned in the fire that destroyed the 'Cosmopolitan' Hotel on this spot three years ago this very night. You may have heard of me. I see that you have. Pardon me, if I keep right on with my work." And to my amazement he picked up a typewriter and threw it out of the window. I listened for the crash, and, hearing nothing, said :

"I have heard of you, William, in a desultory and unsatisfactory way, and should like to hear more about you. Could you favor me with the particulars which escaped the newspapers? You'll find a cigarette, if you smoke, in that case on the bureau."

If it is possible for a ghost to turn paler than he is in his normal condition, that ghost certainly did. "Not for eternal rest," he said, hastily ; "a cigarette was the cause of all my troubles. You are a sympathetic man. I recognize in you rare mediumistic qualities, and I'll tell you the story while I pack. Let me see. How do I get the right crease in these trousers? So ; sometimes I forget, especially when I am excited. But to the story."

Just at this point I took out my watch and glanced at the time. It was twenty minutes of one.

"About four years ago," continued the ghost, "I was a guest at this hotel—or rather, the old hotel that stood on this site. My room corresponded closely to the one you are now occupying. In the apartment under me was a fellow who smoked cigarettes. It is not known on earth, though I know it now, that one of his cigarettes, carelessly thrown aside, started the disastrous blaze. The flames were under good headway before the alarm was raised. I was always a methodical man, and not realizing my danger, arose and began packing my clothes as cool and self-possessed as you have seen me to-night. I think I might have escaped had I not thoughtlessly stopped to crease my trousers. That takes time, and the delay was fatal. Then I lost my head completely and began to throw things out of the window. Excuse me just a moment. I have reached the time when——"

Here the ghost pitched into the night a pair of shoes, a hat, a silver-handled cane, an umbrella and an ink-stand.

"Then," he continued, "I seized my valise and opened the door. The flames were already in the hall, and the smoke pouring in, soon suffocated me. Two days later I attended the inquest in my spiritual form, and was much gratified by the remark of the Coroner, who was sitting on a piece of the tibia and a shin-bone, that I testified by my successful death to the inscrutable wisdom of Providence, who doeth all things well."

The story interested me deeply. "But how happens it," I asked, "that you return to the earth in this systematic way?"

"That's the disagreeable part of it. You see, that after all my care in looking after my property, I entirely forgot my accident insurance policy, and left it on the bureau—you see it there. Of course it was burned up, and my family had nothing in the way of compensation for my death. For this outrageous carelessness I am compelled to return night after night to go over the harrowing scenes of my combustion."

"But why don't you take the policy at once, now that it is in plain sight, and make off and end the matter, and go back to your tibia and shin-bone like a well-ordered corpse?"

"That's just it. I can't. Even with my spiritual discernment I must work out the stupid instincts of mortality. Don't you suppose a spirit, with my keen perceptions, recognizes the idiocy of pitching a typewriter out of the window? Do you think that a ghost, a thing purely of mind, unimpeded by matter, has not the sense to see the crying folly of stopping to crease trousers in a moment like this? It is not that I do not know better now. That is where my punishment comes in. I recognize the stupidity of mortality without the present power to change it. Every night I go just so far. The difference is that now I am conscious of the policy on the bureau, but must go on pitching out typewriter and creasing trousers, only to fall in a volume of flame and smoke on the threshold of yonder door as the clock strikes one."

"Bless my soul," said I, looking uneasily at my watch, "it lacks only nine minutes of one o'clock now. And, upon my word, I fancy I smell something burning. Tell me, my good William, honestly now, don't you think you ghosts could be in better business than coming back to earth and paralyzing people with fear by your unseemly actions?"

"What nonsense," returned the ghost, a little impatiently;

"if you people on earth only knew us as we are, you would blush at your own fears. When I recall those absurd old tales about ghosts clanking heavy chains and dropping heavy weights it makes me positively ill where my stomach used to be. Look at me. I am a disembodied spirit. You can run your finger through any part of me. Now, how in Heaven's name could I drop a weight or clank a heavy chain? My dear boy, I couldn't raise a material hair if I tried all night. There never was a ghost who, by his own exertions, had the slightest physical effect on a mortal, and there never will be. It is a simple and absolute impossibility.

"On the other hand," went on the ghost, earnestly, "think what we must suffer. Take my own case for example. Here I am, a spirit, I grant you. I have no body it is true, but I have a mind, and a mind that despite its growth, is subject more or less, to the weakness and credulity of humanity, being all mind without omniscient. I am, of course, exceedingly nervous and sensitive. Think of the state I must constantly be in. I know that at midnight I must go to a certain room. I cannot tell who is going to occupy that room, whether a commercial traveler, a gentleman like yourself, a soldier, an officer of the law, or a lady. A ghost is a gentleman per se, and his horror at finding himself in a lady's sleeping apartment is equalled only by his sincere grief at her unnecessary fears. Then again the commercial traveler or soldier may, as you have done, mistake me for a burglar and fire at me. To be sure I am incorporeal, and the bullet cannot injure me, but, at the same time, it is an awful shock to my nervous system in addition to the annoyance at being interrupted at my work. Then think of the humiliation, that I, an orderly spirit, should be taken for a common thief at night!"

"Really, William," said I, "your argument is quite remarkable, but I am still puzzled. If you are incorporeal, and I perceive on closer inspection that you are, how can you talk? Where are your vocal cords, your trachea? How can you hear me? I examine you closely and note the absence of the usual auditory apparatus."

"You are wrong," replied the ghost; "you deceive yourself. I do not talk, I do not hear; I communicate with you and you with me by sympathetic impression. As I told you, you have rare mediumistic qualities, but your spirituality is so insufficiently developed that you cannot distinguish between

spiritual communion and mortal interchange of thought. I beg your pardon. I am charmed to have met you"—here the ghost hastily picked up his gripsack—"but I have just time to get to that door. I don't wish to alarm you, but I am sure I smell something burning."

And so did I. There was no doubt of it. I saw the ghost look laughingly at the paper on the bureau and run swiftly across the room, and I'll swear that I saw him throw open the door and fall in the volume of smoke and flame that poured into the chamber. And all the time there was a tremendous singing in my ears, with the sound of the banging of doors and the shouting of men. And I heard a voice :

"Mr. Wolcott ! Mr. Wolcott ! Get up quick ! Come down the back way ! It's on fire, the house !"

* * * * *

I, James Wolcott, am a lawyer and a man of unimpeachable veracity. It is true that I was the guest at the Phoenix Hotel, in Parkville, Oct. 10, the night it burned to the ground. It is true that the porter called me at precisely one o'clock in the morning, and that I escaped in very scant attire, securing my watch, pocket-book and legal papers. It is also true that an accident policy, which I had taken out before leaving the city, was forgotten and burned in the flames. All these facts are heretofore unrevealed, as I have dreaded the notoriety attending the revelation of them by a sensational press. I disclose them now, not in the interest of spiritualists and the fanatical element of the promoters of physical research, but merely to dispel a very popular delusion concerning ghosts and to calm the fears of the superimaginative and the superstitious.

For myself let me say if I have never seen a ghost since that night of adventure, it is not because I have not desired it. I have forgiven Mary. Peace be to her, for I revere her memory and thank her for her idle chatter. I have sought out country graveyards on tempestuous nights, and sat alone on marble slabs as the clock tolled the hour of twelve. Over my table, in my study, hangs a grinning skull, and many a time between the hours of twelve and one, I have turned down the light, stood before the hideous emblem of mortality, and called on Israel or Barnaid, as the humor might suggest. But all in vain. No ghosts rise at my bidding. Alone I can accomplish nothing with the supernatural.

THE RAJAH'S CHESSMEN.

BY ERNEST DELANCEY PIERSON.



THE street he entered was remote and shabby. At one time in the city's history it must have been an aristocratic quarter, but now was given over to the poorest classes. The fine iron work about the doors and windows was eaten with rust, while the walls of the buildings were seamed and scarred as if they had stood through a bombardment.

The gloomy desolation of the place with its relics of former grandeur accorded well with the young man's mood. Life for him had lost its savor and only the memories of the past remained.

What surprised Lascelle was to find in such a mean street a shop devoted to the sale of curios. Loving art in all its phases, he could not resist the temptation to stop and peer in the window.

At first his eyes, unaccustomed to the light, caught only a confused jumble of colors, but he soon saw that he had stumbled upon a veritable museum of treasures.

Thinking to divert his mind, he stepped through the open doorway, almost tripping over a bronze idol with six outstretched arms that seemed set like a sinister guardian over the place.

Wherever his eyes turned he saw curios of unique value in grotesque confusion, like the refuse of an auction room.

A Roman chair of ebony, curiously inwrought with brass, supported a dancing girl of the modern French school, whose white throat was encircled with a shell necklace from the South Seas. A frail-looking spinet with mother-of-pearl keys, displayed on its top a silver mirror of Florentine design, before which a hideous Chinese monster was leering in squat ugliness. Near by a curious set of chessmen in ebony and ivory attracted the young man's attention, and he could not resist the temptation to take them up, one by one, and examine them.

"You are fond of chess?" said a voice at his elbow.

Lascelle started as if caught in some guilty act. It was only a withered old man in a long, faded dressing-gown, his gleaming

bald head partly hidden by a black velvet cap. Seen under any other circumstances this hawk-like face and shriveled figure would have seemed bizarre and grotesque, but here he was just suited to his surroundings, a curio come to life.

"Chess is a noble game," continued the old man, moving his thin, pale lips together. "When I was young it was my passion in life, but now that I am old, I must spare my brain and thought for more serious things."

"As you say," replied Lascelle, "it drains the brain—for that I have given up playing myself." Again he fingered the chessmen, feeling a pleasure in the contact like a gambler who touches the familiar cards after a long abstinence. He sighed deeply and put them down, feeling the old desire to play rise strong within him above all efforts of his will.

"It is always a pleasure for me to meet with a true lover of art," said the dealer, breaking the thread of his thoughts. "If you will trouble yourself to follow me I will show you the choicest of my collection and which the crowd never see. Come," and Lascelle followed, for despite his first feeling of repulsion there was something magnetic about the patriarch.

They passed to the end of the shop, and descending a short flight of steps entered a room, which in other days should have been the library of the mansion. Empty, it must have been a commodious apartment, but now every available corner was occupied with strange and curious things, the relics of the ages.

"Sit down," said the old man, pushing towards his guest a teak wood chair, richly inlaid with brass. "Look about you, while I prepare some refreshment," and he busied himself making coffee over a copper brazier, filled with glowing charcoal, which stood on a tripod nearby. The sunlight, sifting through the bamboo screens that hid the windows, caused every shining object in the room to coruscate like jewels of many facets. Wherever the young man's eyes wandered they encountered some masterpiece in its way, unique, matchless. All this magnificence was tossed recklessly about in prodigal profusion, but in a tortoise shell case, inlaid with gold, having a crystal front, the cream of the collection was preserved; uncut jewels, Tanagra figures, semi-precious stones carved curiously, and a set of chess of silver and iron exquisitely enameled and carved.

"Ah! I see you are admiring my chessmen," said the old man, at his elbow. "Truly, there are none others like them in the whole world."

He arranged two cups of delicate porcelain on the table and filled them with the blackest of coffee.

"They are for sale?" asked Lascelle, sipping his beverage.

"Never, nor anything else in that case. As for the chess, I bought them of an English sailor, who said they had once belonged to the Rajah of Hyderabad. I had them for twenty dollars."

"Twenty dollars!" exclaimed Lascelle, in astonishment. "The man was mad!"

"No doubt, for he had all of a sailor's superstitions exaggerated through his slavery to drugs. He would have parted with them for less, but I was in a generous mood. They carried a curse, he said; misfortunes had followed him ever since they came into his possession." The old dealer smiled grimly. "That was years ago, but the fate that awaits the owner of these chess has not overtaken me—yet," and he dipped his lips in the cup.

"Do you know," he said, after a pause, "that sometimes I fancy there is something almost human about those chessmen. Often when I am half dreaming over a problem, some hidden force seems to guide my hand. Ah, my friend, I have laid out some famous campaigns with those men. I should not fear to meet a master of the game with those little fellows in my service."

So this absurd old man rambled on; evidently living so long among curious things had affected his brain, and made of his mind a storehouse of weird and wondrous fancies.

But as Lascelle looked again at the men in the case, it seemed to him that the Kings and Queens and Knights wore an alert look that was almost human, the tiny horses tugged at their bridles, and the faces of the little men and women became firm with resolve.

The old dealer took his treasures out of the case and set them upon a teak wood board inlaid with ivory, which he laid on the table, after removing the cups. To Lascelle, it seemed as if he were looking down on a battlefield through the wrong end of a field-glass. He felt that he would not have been surprised to hear the horses neigh and see the sparks of flashing swords. Mechanically he picked up a little ivory Queen. Had his misfortune of the last week unsettled his brain? He could have sworn that the Queen moved in his palm like a live thing.

So many chess-players of eminence had gone mad—was he to be numbered, too, with those who had fallen victims to the game?

"Come!" broke in the old man on his thoughts. "You look like one in need of distraction. Let us play a game; there is nothing like it to divert the mind. But," and a smile puckered up his thin lips, "I warn you that I am a formidable antagonist—I never lose."

Lascelle still felt a pride in his skill, and despite his determination never to play again, he could not pass such a challenge by unnoticed. He would teach this old fool a lesson—show him that the chessmen were not endowed with any supernatural powers, but were like any others, save in their workmanship. With nervous fingers he began to arrange the men on the board without saying a word.

Confident of success, Lascelle played an aggressive game. The old man, without betraying the least excitement, with half closed eyes, seemed far away in thought, yet his moves were brilliant and rapid. Mechanically his hand rose, and then rested on the piece he meant to play, trembled a moment, and then moved across the board. It was as if some other force was at work making the moves. There was something so uncanny about the old man's play as to suggest the supernatural. Lascelle watched him with a feeling akin to terror, and blundered in his game. He felt like one who is fighting with an opponent in the dark who could see him, but whom he could not see. One by one his men had been swept away, but suddenly the old man uttered a cry, let the piece fall he was about to play, and clutched at his heart.

Before Lascelle could even speak he had drawn a small vial from his breast, and uncorking it, pressed it to his lips. The color returned to his lips in a moment.

"Heart trouble," he said, briefly; "I am subject to it; don't be alarmed, it is not likely to happen again to-day. Besides, I have a sovereign restorer here," pointing to the vial which he had laid on the table. "It has saved my life many a time when I should have perished for want of it. Let us go on; I shall not make such a scene again." Lascelle, once more under the fascinating spell of the game, continued to play.

The attack had left traces on the old man's features, but if anything he played even more brilliantly than before. In vain did Lascelle put forth all his powers; the very evil one seemed fighting against him. There could be but one outcome to the game, he was beaten, and that, too, by a doddering old man, half palsied.

There was only one explanation, which, as absurd as it seemed, he could not dismiss, and that was that some mysterious force was at work which had won for his opponent the game.

What might he not accomplish with the Rajah's chessmen, how he could turn his enemy's triumph into defeat, and become the invincible chess player of the world!

He must, he would possess the chess, even if they cost him his entire fortune. But would the dealer sell?

"Mate!" exclaimed the old man, "as I told you at the start, I should win, but you play a pretty game, young man, a very pretty game; one might say almost as good as a professional."

Lascelle winced.

"I am out of practice," he said, a little sullenly, "and my thoughts were elsewhere. Had I been in better form, you would not have had such an easy victory." He was fencing for an opening to make a bid for the chess.

"It would have been just the same," continued his opponent, with a provoking smile. "The owner of these chess can never be beaten," and he began to roll a cigarette with his long tobacco-stained fingers.

Lascelle was silent for a moment, and chewed the end of his mustache reflectively.

"I will give you ten thousand dollars for those chessmen," he said, briefly. "Not because they possess any occult power, but on account of their workmanship, which is unique and precious."

"I told you they were not for sale," said the dealer, puffing slowly on his cigarette.

"Come, I will double it; you have other sets almost as beautiful." The man must certainly be mad to refuse such an offer. His provoking calmness was unbearable, but he knew that to gain his point he must appear outwardly calm. To every offer he made, the dealer repeated with monotonous reiteration, "They are not for sale."

"But you are an old man; you have not many years to live," urged Lascelle; "you cannot carry them with you to the grave——"

"But I can destroy them before I go. No, it is useless to tempt me—it is only a waste of time. As for dying, I have many years before me to enjoy life. I am strong——"

He never completed the sentence, the old look of agony came into his face, and a hoarse cry broke from his parted lips. He struggled to reach the vial on the table. Lascelle, with a quick

jerk of his wrist, sent the tiny bottle out of reach. It shattered in fragments on the floor. The old man tried to struggle from his chair, clinging desperately to the edge of the table to steady himself. Lascelle huddled where he sat, watched him with hard, unpitying eyes. With a convulsive effort, summoning up the last atom of his strength, the dying man staggered to his feet, and pointing a shaking finger at Lascelle, uttered a word which faded on his lips. For a moment only he stood there, then his long arms helplessly beat the air, and crashing down upon the table, he rolled over on the floor.

Lascelle had not moved, and for some time he sat there staring at vacancy. The strange surroundings, the rapidity with which the scene had passed, all seemed so unreal that his mind at first could not grasp its deadly import. He waited as if hoping that presently he should wake up and find that after all it was only a dream of a disordered brain.

But there lay that *thing* on the floor, and though he turned his face away, he could not shut out the sight. Hurriedly he tore down a piece of tapestry from the wall and flung it over the body, but the fierce eyes seemed to pursue him still.

On the table stood the chess huddled in irregular groups, and to his frightened fancy they seemed to have drawn together to discuss the tragedy. They were his now to do with as he willed, and for the moment he forgot the lifeless clay at his feet. After all, what was the snuffing out of that feeble taper compared to the prize he had won? He had but forestalled fate a very little while.

With eager hands now grown calm he crowded the chessmen into his pockets and hurried to the door. Here he paused a moment to listen, but only the ordinary street sounds fell on his ear. Yet as he glided through the doorway he thought he heard a mocking laugh, harsh and discordant from within, that dodged his steps, and all the walls took up the sound and re-echoed it. With a shudder of horror he turned and fled as if for his life out into the street. After the gloom of the shop the blessed sunlight seemed to fall on him like a benediction, and he breathed more freely. Casting a hurried look around to satisfy himself that he had not been observed, Lascelle glided away.

* * * * *

“George, it cannot be too late for you to withdraw; you can plead illness—anything! Do it for my sake.” She laid her hand

lightly on his shoulder as she spoke and looked earnestly down in his eyes.

The lamps had not been lit in the drawing-room, and they sat in the embrasure of the window. She was a pretty girl, and there was tenderness in her touch and tone that moved Lascelle, and for the moment he found himself wavering. Then he laughed uneasily.

"It would be absurd at this late hour, Leila, and you know I have so much at stake. Every penny I own has been placed on this game. Instead of having to face the world with respectable penury we shall be quite rich——"

"But if you should lose?"

"Lose? I cannot! I cannot explain to you, nor would you understand if I attempted to, but there is no possible chance of my losing."

He spoke up bravely, but even as the words left his lips it seemed to him as if he felt a cold breath of air pass across his face, damp and grave-like. He shuddered. It was silly of him to become fearful at this hour when victory was so near at hand.

"I must leave you now, Leila," stooping to kiss her softly. "Have no fear of the outcome, and I promise you that after to-night I will never play again."

She sighed, seeing that it was useless so attempt to dissuade him further.

"And you will come and tell me when it is all over?" she said, following him to the door. "You know I shall not sleep a wink until I am sure of the result."

"You shall be the first to hear the good news," he said; then, as if not daring to trust himself longer in her presence, he hurried away.

If Lascelle's conscience had troubled him since he came into possession of the mysterious chessmen, the world in which he moved saw nothing of it. He was, if anything, in better spirits than when he went away. If his gayety had a false ring and his laughter was at times forced, no one troubled himself analyzing the causes.

As for the chess, he had often tested their curious powers, and they had never failed him. Secretly he had made a good deal of money in private wagers, and to-night he would win a fortune that would enable him to marry the woman he had loved so long. He would not let her sacrifice herself for a life of polite penury, so he had planned this last *coup* to raise his

fortune to a comfortable figure. It was strange that the secret which had lain so lightly upon him all these weeks tonight should be so heavy to bear. Why should he feel despondent? No accusing voice could now rise up against him. The only witness was under ground and forgotten. What had he to fear?

Promptly at eight o'clock he sat down before a chess table in the Progress Club, where the members and a few admirers of the game had assembled to witness the contest. His opponent—a bearded German with an abnormally high forehead—was drumming impatiently on the table with his fingers. Lascelle provided his own chess, and it was remarked that he seemed to be ill at ease, and did not play with his usual calmness. Several times he let a piece fall when making a move, but as the game proceeded some of his old confidence returned. Like slaves of his will the little pieces were doing their duty. A frown gathered on his opponent's face as he saw his men swept away with monotonous regularity. Lascelle, now confident of victory, began to think of Leila, the future, and a hundred other things that had no connection with the game. He lapsed into a dreamy mood, assured that the chess would work out their own salvation. He was like a man playing on in a dream.

Suddenly he started. One of his Knights had been taken! He was wide awake now and on the alert. A Queen was captured! What could this mean? Were the chess about to play him false? His brain was reeling with a sudden dizziness and all the pieces seemed staggering about the board. He played on with a dogged fury, losing ground by degrees and gaining nothing. He tried to bend his mind on the game, but it was too late, and he blundered hopelessly. The professorial-looking opponent lost his frown and brightened visibly, for he thought he saw his way to victory. Lascelle, with parted lips and breathing hard, played on with a strangling feeling in his throat.

The provoking coolness of his opponent only served to excite his feelings further. "Mate in five moves," said the German, in a low voice. "One," bringing down his Queen on the table. Lascelle could not solve his neighbor's method of reasoning, or see how it was possible to force a mate in five moves. He was soon to learn.

They played on, then Lascelle saw that he had been led into a skillfully laid trap. His King had now only one move followed by mate. The chess that he had sinned to possess had betrayed

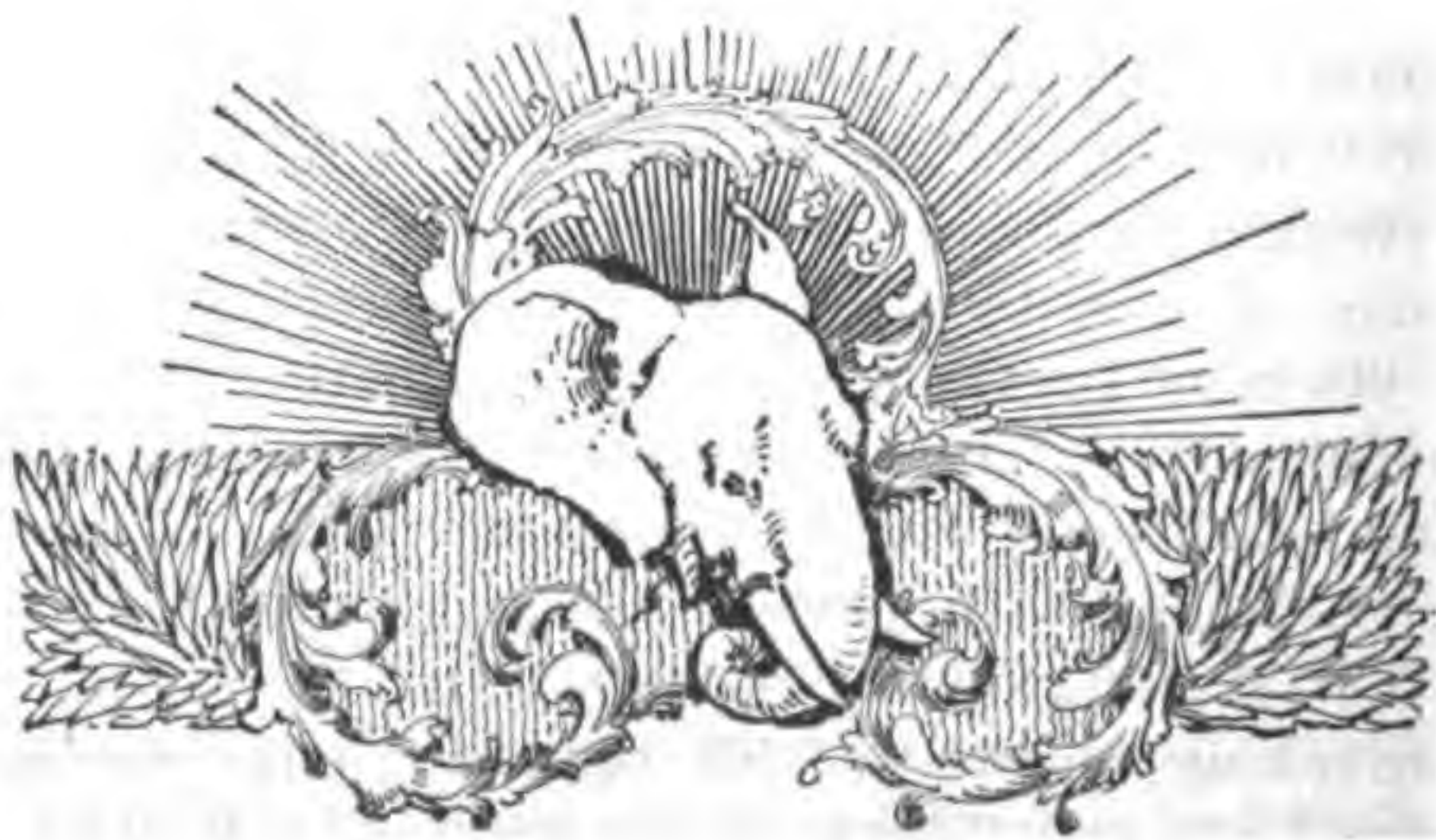
him! He nerved himself to make the last move, hoping for the impossible. What a strange hand had his opponent—long-fingered, wrinkled with age, with pointed, claw-like nails!

He raised his eyes with a feeling of horror. The German sat smiling in his place, but beside him, bending over and guiding his hand, stood a gray, indistinct figure. It raised its face and looked at Lascelle with burning eyes.

Again he heard that mocking sound which had rung in his ears since that dreadful day he had fled in terror from the scene of his sin.

“Five—mate!” cried the opponent, jubilantly.

But Lascelle did not hear; he was staring fixedly before him. Then he threw back his head and laughed. His mind was broken.



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THE QUEEN OF THE AIR.

BY FRANCIS WORCESTER DOUGHTY.



HE cloud which had been hovering over old Salvadore broke as Jack Fortescue reached that point on the Lago Lugano where its usually placid waters are suddenly enclosed by wild, precipitous mountains, pine clad, dark and gloomy, darker than ever now because of the approaching storm.

“Hey! Hello! Hey! Hello!”

Again and again Jack shouted as only an American boy can shout, but his two chums did not hear and consequently did not answer.

The storm cloud seemed to have suddenly dropped between them; the other boats were being driven on toward Porlezza, and what could Jack do under the circumstances but cling desperately to his overturned single skiff and shout again—shout with all his might:

“Hey! Hello! Hey! Hello!”

It was now as black as night, and the wind was whirling past the poor fellow with that fearful force often assumed during these sudden storms, which come sweeping down from the Alps to ruffle the waters of the Swiss *lago*s. Dire disasters

have happened from this cause; what happened now was the sweeping of Jack Fortescue's overturned scull into the "Gooseneck," that narrow rift in the mountain through which a fraction of the waters of Lugano escape, to be precipitated over *des Capuchines*, that charming little waterfall which Swiss tourists read of, but so seldom see.

On flew the scull through the sweeping torrents of rain, Jack holding on desperately, and never guessing what had occurred. In less than three minutes the boat was caught in the suck of the falls, and a sudden drop into a miniature maelstrom came.

What became of the scull after that Jack never knew. His fall was into the pool, and so he escaped the rocks. He had need to congratulate himself on the presence of mind which prompted him to turn over on his back and lie quiet, and he was swept down the "Gooseneck" through the darkness, now shouting for help, now losing heart, and wondering if help would ever come, until all at once he heard the sound of oars and saw a light flashing before him through the storm.

"Hello, there! Hello! Boat ahoy! Help me out of this and I'll never forget you!" shouted Jack, rising in the water and waving his hand to the young girl who was pulling the boat across the "Gooseneck," made visible now by the flash of the lantern in the bows.

She saw him—the lantern was a reflector, and its light struck full on Jack's face. Yet the girl did not answer; she seemed to hesitate, and was inclined to pull away.

But our young American was of a different mind; with a few bold strokes he managed to throw himself across the course of the boat. When the girl saw him coming she lay back on her oars and let him come.

"I suppose I may get in," said Jack, catching the gunwale—he scarcely expected to be understood.

The rower turned a face toward him pretty enough to make Jack forget his danger, and replied in perfect English, but in hurried, agitated tones:

"I cannot refuse you, sir. I'll put you ashore, but you must go right away—you'll promise me that?"

It was only a few rods to the old, ruined tower on the shore, from whose windows lights faintly twinkled—evidently the girl's destination was there.

"I'll promise you anything," said Jack; "anything at all to get out of this wretched fix."

He climbed into the boat scarcely giving it a tremor, so deftly did he throw himself over its side, and then as the girl seemed embarrassed and made no reply, he went on to tell of his accident, offering to pay for any accommodation he might receive in the tower where she admitted, by a silent inclination of the head, she belonged, a faint blush overspreading her face when the last proposition was put.

"I don't wish for your money, sir," she replied hastily. "You cannot enter the tower—it is impossible—but I will show you a path which will take you back to Lugano, if that is where you are from."

"I belong in New York, and I fancy you also may be an American by the way you speak," replied Jack, coolly. "Shan't I take the oars and make the landing? No? I can do it all right, but, of course, I shan't insist."

"No, no! I am accustomed to the boat," replied the girl, hurriedly. "I am sorry to refuse you shelter, sir, but I cannot help it. My father is very peculiar and we live alone. Under other circumstances he might be glad to meet a New Yorker, for, as you have guessed, we once lived there, but now——"

"Ariel! Ariel! Who is that in the boat? How dare you bring a stranger here!"

They had now gained the little landing at the foot of the quaint old tower, which stood upon a rocky platform perhaps twenty feet up the cliffs.

Suddenly the upper window, behind which Jack had observed the light burning, was raised and a man thrust his head out.

He held a large reflecting lantern, with which he flashed down a light of wonderful power upon the boat.

The girl sprang out upon the landing.

"Go!" she whispered. "Take the boat—pull away as fast as you can if you value your life!"

Then calling out something in French, so rapidly spoken that Jack could not follow her, she ran toward the door of the tower, opened it and disappeared within.

But Jack was in no hurry to take his departure.

The old man was still leaning out of the window waving the lantern back and forth and looking down at him.

His was a curious face; thin, attenuated to a degree, hollow, sunken cheeks; flashing eyes of intense power; a broad forehead, from which the gray, stubby hair went straight up. He was clad in a greasy old dressing gown, gathered about his spare

frame in such a fashion as to convey the hint that there was little beneath it.

"Who are you?" he called down in a thin, cracked voice. "Ariel says she rescued you from the Gooseneck. Why don't you go away? What do you stand there gaping at me for? *Mon dieu!* One would think I was some wild beast in a menagerie! *Sacre bleu!* Begone!"

"If you'll show me the path to Lugano I'll go," replied Jack. "I've no wish to intrude; all I asked was a chance to dry myself by the fire, and——"

"Stop!" interrupted the old man; "an idea strikes me—you are an American, Ariel says. Do you know anything of machinery?"

"Certainly I do. I went through a complete course of mechanical and electrical engineering," replied Jack.

Perhaps he was glad of an excuse to penetrate the mystery of the old tower, and learn more of the beautiful Ariel who had so earnestly warned him off.

"Ha! Then by Heaven you are just the man I need!" responded the strange figure at the tower window. "Ariel! Ariel! Open the door! Come right up, sir! You shall dry your clothes by my fire. Ha, ha, ha! Dry them thoroughly, so that you will never need to dry them again!"

There was no one to be seen when the door of the tower opened. The movements of the latch seemed to be controlled by a chain pulled from above.

"Come up!" called the old man from the head of the stairs. "Come right up!"

Jack thought he heard a low moan behind him, and his heart almost failed him, for he distinctly heard someone whisper out of the darkness: "Don't go!"

But Jack was not to be frightened off so easily. "I'll see the end of this if I die for it," he determined; "and what's more I'll see that girl again." But Ariel was invisible then, although he tried his best to penetrate the darkness behind him, and so Jack went up-stairs.

The old man was waiting for him, lantern in hand; he stood with his back against a door and fixed his eyes upon Jack.

"Look here, young man," he said. "I want help—perhaps you can give it to me. My brain is all in a whirl. I go over and over the same ground until I begin to think I am actually going mad. *Mon Dieu!* Mad with the greatest discovery of the age

completed—yes, completed, if I could only adjust the one cog which stands between me and success.”

“I’m sure I’ll be pleased to help you if I can, sir,” replied Jack, quietly.

“What’s your name?”

“Fortescue—Jack Fortescue.”

“An American?”

“Yes.”

“Ha! A great country. I lived in New York five years. I was forced to leave because I did not dare to proceed with my invention there under the eyes of your Yankee mechanics; they would have robbed me; they would have stolen my ideas at the very moment of success, but here the people know nothing. They are mere animals. What do I care that they call me the crazy man of the old Torrelli Tower! Ha! Ha! Ha! Some night I shall fly away and leave them—perhaps to-night! Who knows? But come in—come in!”

He flung open the door and ushered Jack into a small room, long and narrow, following the shape of the tower.

The floor was bare, and instead of ceiling, Jack saw above him a sort of penthouse roof constructed of strong canvas, fastened down at the sides, and supported on a light wooden frame.

A few feet from the door rose a canvas partition, cutting off what he judged to be the largest part of the room, and through the middle of this projected a curious object—so singular in its appearance that the young man’s attention was riveted upon it at once.

It appeared to be a portion of a huge cone made of plates of solid steel, closely riveted, to which was attached a curiously complicated steering gear.

Projecting on either side, partly hidden by the curtain, were fan-like attachments, which seemed to work on eccentrics.

But so much of the machine was concealed that it was quite impossible to guess its full design or purpose.

The old man carefully shut the door, put up two heavy iron bars, and turned the key with trembling hand.

“Mr. Fortescue,” he said, speaking in a high-pitched voice, which showed plainly enough the intense excitement under which he was laboring, “you see before you the result of years of toil and anxious thought now all but completed. Don’t ask me its nature, or its intended use, for I communicate that to no one; nor is it necessary that you should know unless you can aid me.

All I want is to complete this rudder. You will see by examining it that it works from both sides, power being communicated by means of these chains; but the difficulty is to control the opening and closing of the fans—that is to say, so that any individual fan can have the power cut off instantly. Here, examine it for yourself and the case will be plainer. But first, it is but fair that I should introduce myself. I am Professor Guimard—the great Guimard!”

He drew himself up to his full height and stood there for Jack to gaze upon him, his whole body in a tremble, his eyes blazing with that same wild light.

Jack bowed and tried hard to make it appear that he was greatly impressed, although inasmuch as he had never heard of the Guimard, this was somewhat difficult.

“I’m sure I shall be pleased to help you, if I can, sir,” he said, “but in these wet clothes——”

“Presently, presently, you shall dry them, young man!” broke in the professor, eagerly; “now then, just look here——”

The professor launched out into a detailed explanation of his wants.

Jack took hold like an old hand, and the conversation for the next few moments related entirely to mechanics.

Meanwhile the storm seemed to be increasing. The lightning played about the old tower, the thunder crashed and the rain rattled upon the canvas roof.

“I see what you want,” cried Jack, after a little. “It is very simple, just a cog connection here—etc., etc.” Jack told it off like the true machinist that he was.

The “Great Guimard” gave a cry of joy.

“Right! Right!” he exclaimed. “That is it. My muddled brain could not grasp it. *Mon Dieu!* but I am too weak to forge the piece to-night. Could you—would you, young man? If you will, I—I——”

“Why I could make it in half an hour if I had the means at hand,” said Jack.

“They are at hand! You shall do it now. You shall see this great invention in its fullness; you shall see it work! Oh, I promise you it will revolutionize the world.”

He laid his hand on the canvas and was about to pull it aside, when a cry was heard without the door.

“Father! Father! Don’t do it! Oh, don’t!”

The professor turned pale and stamped his foot in rage.

"Begone, girl!" he cried. "Why do you interfere with us? Leave me to manage my own affairs, or——"

The rest was in French.

Jack heard low sobs and retreating footsteps.

Professor Guimard tore away the canvas and the mysterious invention stood fully revealed.

A great cigar-shaped hollow cone, some twenty feet in length by four in width, provided with seats amidships; two sails attached to masts extending up into the peak of the canvas roof; twelve paddles, six on a side, projecting down from the edge of the cone. On the side was painted:

QUEEN OF THE AIR.

In short, it was a flying machine, and Jack so exclaimed.

"Yes, yes, yes! It is! It is so!" cried Guimard. "It is mine; all mine! No one shall steal it from me! Not a man lives who has ever done an hour's work on it but myself! No one in the whole world knows it is here! But you—you, Mr. Fortescue—shall be the exception. Don't be afraid; oh, yes; you—you are perfectly safe. You shall share the secret with me and share my triumph! Don't heed what Ariel may have said to you—the time for all that has past. Do what I ask, and I—I—I will reward you well! See, you shall go to my forge in the basement and make it for me, and then you shall put it on, and then, and then—why, then we will fly together—the dreams of Regiomontanus, sextus of Ratisbon, Kircher, Porta, Schott, Gassendi, Lana, Ramus, Bishop Wilkens, and the Montgolfiers shall be realized. We will fly together to fame and fortune, and you shall never leave this tower until the work is done!"

He rattled off the names of the old medieval would-be aeronauts with amazing rapidity, his eyes flashed fire, his hands trembled as he continued to speak pointing out the workings of the machine.

"And here," he added, "is the lever which controls it all. Electricity! One turn of this handle and on goes the current, and the paddles start. Don't be afraid. My bird's wings are chained. It cannot escape. You will perceive that it rests on a pivot, and that by attaching this eccentric I convey to it a rotary motion which has enabled me to pursue my experiments here in this room, although the natural bent of its force would impel it to rise. Stand where you are, Fortescue, and you shall see it work. All that is now needed is to apply your idea to the rudder,

and the work is done, the whole system of travel will be revolutionized, and I——”

Professor Guimard had his hand on the lever—perhaps he moved it too far, throwing too strong a current into the wires which controlled his strange invention—perhaps the lightning did it, making connection with the battery within the machine in some mysterious way.

At all events just then came a flash of blinding intensity, a thunderclap which shook the old tower to its very foundation, and all at once the paddles began to work back and forth.

“Look out! It’s off the center pivot!” shouted Guimard, leaping back. “Merciful God! What now!”

Useless warning!

To reach the door was impossible, to remain standing where they were meant death.

Round and round the enclosure the huge steel monster began gyrating, its paddles thrashing the air with fearful force, tearing itself loose from the chains which held it, and these flying hither and thither—for they were still attached to the air-ship—made it dangerous to move, dangerous to stand still, dangerous to exist in the presence of this strange creation, which even its creator could no longer control.

“Help! Help! Oh, Fortescue, think of something! Do something!” the Professor screamed, prancing about the confined space, pursued by the terrible monster, loose for death and destruction now.

“The current! What controls the current?” roared Jack, his voice scarcely audible above the awful din of the thrashing chains, the grinding of the huge fans, and the grating of the steel upon the sanded floor.

He did not hear, and no wonder, for the noise was awful, but above it all Ariel’s voice was heard.

“Father! Father!” she screamed without. “Open the door—open the door!”

She flung herself against it again and again as Jack and the Professor ran wildly on—ran for their lives—ran because to stop for a single instant meant death. Twice Jack got a flying chain against his head—twice the Professor stumbled and all but sealed his doom, for the merciless fan was close upon him each time, when, with a mighty effort, he regained his footing and dashed on.

“The door! Open the door!” yelled Jack, for he caught Ariel’s words as he ran.

"Open the door!" she cried. "Open the door! I can save you! I can turn off the current from where I stand!"

"Oh, God! Oh, God have mercy!" groaned Guimard, as they ran. "This is justice! This is righteous retribution! Blood for blood! It has come at last! The bones of dead men lie beneath this tower! I would have killed you too, but now—but now——"

Faster—faster—still faster!

With every second those dreadful fans seemed to gain additional power.

"The key! The key!" shouted Jack, reaching back his hand, for the Professor had drawn nearer.

One of the chains struck him a cruel blow, and dashed his hand down, but nothing daunted he tried again, and this time got it, for Guimard drew the key from his pocket, and succeeded in bringing it within Jack's reach.

Around the room they flew. This time as they passed the door, Jack managed to dislodge the bars.

They fell to the floor with a thud as he went rushing on.

"Ariel! Stand by us, Ariel! I'll open the door next time!" he shouted.

Whether he was heard or not it was impossible to say, for the girl kept right on screaming and pounding upon the door.

Jack nerved himself for the final effort. When next he came abreast of the door, he managed to get the key in the lock and give it a turn.

The door flew open, revealing Ariel with her hair hanging loosely about her shoulders, her eyes blazing with excitement.

"Give me a moment—only a moment!" she cried.

Too late!

Even as she spoke a flying chain struck her.

It wound itself about her frail form and dragged her on.

"Save me! Save me!" she shrieked.

Who could save her now?

Not Jack!

He had tried it already.

He fell back on the instant and tried to seize her, and the chain caught him, too.

Like a flash they were bound together. Jack's arms were tightly clasped about the girl—he could not move.

But he could use his eyes if not his hands. He saw the old man make one mad leap and gain the deck of the machine.

"Eureka ! I have won at last !" he shrieked madly—and mad now he doubtless was. "She flies ! She flies ! My Queen ! The Queen of the Air !"

He pulled a lever and instantly the huge air-ship rose, tearing its way through the frail canvas roof.

Still clutching Ariel in his arms, still imprisoned by the chain, Jack went with it.

Ariel's head dropped upon his shoulder—she had fainted—keeping one arm around her, Jack, with a mighty effort, managed to free the other hand—his right hand—and clutched the chain.

In a second they were in the air, floating above the tower.

The great Guimard was shouting wildly. Looking up, Jack could see him dancing like a madman on the deck of the machine.

"She flies ! Oh, yes, she flies !" he kept yelling.

Up ! Up ! Up !

Jack closed his eyes in horror ; his brain reeled, for he could feel it going—he realized that the chain was unwinding, and worse than all, his hand was losing its power—another second and he lost his hold.

Down ! Down ! Down !

Both arms about the unconscious girl—down into the "Goose-neck." It saved them ! The water was deep ; they were being swept along by the rushing stream.

Looking up, Jack could see a brilliant flashlight sweeping the Heavens above him. Straining his eyes he could dimly discern the outlines of the huge air-ship for a single instant, then the light vanished and he saw it no more.

Winding one arm tighter about the girl, Jack used the other and his legs to good advantage ; it took time and strength to do it, but at last he gained the shore.

"Ariel ! Ariel ! Ariel !"

Again and again Jack called her name—called her back to life, perhaps, for she was almost gone.

Now, this story is told as Jack Fortescue himself told it, and as his narration stopped right here, there is no more to tell, except to quote the brief explanation given to his two chums when they met at the hotel at Lugano next day.

"Yes, I'm married, boys. I fell in with my wife last night, no matter how nor where. She was alone in the world and utterly friendless—so I married her. I'm satisfied. I hope you are."

It would have made no difference if they had been otherwise, for Jack Fortescue was a young man of independent fortune and strong ideas, and usually did as he pleased.

And the air-ship?

Its wreck was seen floating in the Mediterranean off the Sicilian coast.

Weeks afterward Jack read the account in an old paper, picked up in a cafe at Naples.

The account referred to the strange object seen as presumably some newly invented torpedo, and expressed regret that it should have sunk before the steamer from whose deck it was discovered could approach near enough to more closely inspect it.

Only Jack and Ariel knew that it could have been nothing else than the **QUEEN OF THE AIR.**



THE GHOST AND THE JEWELS.

BY LURANA W. SHELDON.



AWOKE this morning in the ward of a hospital, the most interesting patient, the house physician tells me, that has ever been received here since the building was erected.

The interesting part did not lie in the fact that I had been found unconscious in the street with apparently no trace of injury or illness upon me, but because when the ambulance surgeon examined me for papers he found that my pockets were fairly bulging with precious gems, the value of which meant a princely fortune.

I was weak and dazed when the physician told me about it, but noticing intuitively how keenly he watched me, and how suspiciously he and the nurse glanced at each other now and then, I hastened to rally my returning strength in order to tell him as quickly as possible the details of my most horrible experience.

It is not often that a man gets lost in the woods adjoining his native village, but in the darkness of last night's sudden storm I strayed from the path, and soon had lost my bearings completely.

With astonishing swiftness the sky became as black as ink, and the rain began falling with hardly a moment's warning.

On and on I went through the rain and darkness, getting more and more confused about my location, as I noticed no lights, even in the distance.

I knew that the woods extended many miles toward the city, but whether I was headed toward the town or for home, I could not discern in the impenetrable darkness.

I remained under the trees as long as I dared, then fled from their protection in awful terror, as the lightning struck one and shivered its branches.

There was nothing to do but search for shelter. I rushed hither and thither in the darkness and cried aloud, hoping that someone would hear me.

I was wet to the skin and breathless from running, yet I dared not stop for a single moment.

Suddenly in the light of a blinding flash I saw before me the

outlines of a house standing by the roadside, but a few steps distant.

Even in the first moment of delight I was thrilled with alarm at its unexpected presence in that spot. I knew the district as well as I knew my farm, and I was positive there was no such house within fifty miles of that location.

A feeling of horror swept through my brain—the sight of the house had completely unnerved me.

Yet there it stood, grim, silent and spectral. There was not a glimmer of light from basement to roof, and the whole architecture of the house looked strange and unearthly.

The wind swept by me in furious gusts, the rain poured down and threatened to engulf me. There was nothing to do but rush to the house and trust to the Fates for my night's protection.

I pounded on the door, but there was no response. In sheer desperation I broke in a window.

When I was safely inside and away from the storm I found that I was able to think more calmly. A thrill of relief passed over my form, yet my heart seemed to sicken and sink within me.

The atmosphere of the house was cold and damp, there was the odor of a vault in the room I had entered.

Hastily scratching a match I looked around. Wonder of wonders! I had found a palace!

The draperies, although musty, were rich with gold, the furniture was heavy and the carpet like velvet.

I called aloud to my unseen host.

Surely someone must inhabit this princely dwelling.

But the echo of my voice came back to me in such a hollow moan that I fairly trembled. In spite of the hangings and furniture of the place my cry had resounded from room to room, and returned to me as empty as though I had screamed in a tunnel.

Such a curious matter affected me strangely. It was another proof of the unnatural appearance of the house, and yet I was inside it and it had not crumbled.

Creeping from room to room, I inspected the dwelling, finding luxury and magnificence everywhere, but no sign or sound of a living tenant.

At last I became too drowsy to feel afraid, and too utterly weary to spend more time in speculation. Whatever it was, it

was a shelter from the storm, and if it was deserted, my presence would not harm it.

Cautiously I groped my way to the stairs, then climbed them in search of a sleeping apartment. The velvet carpet was like moss beneath my feet; an army might have tramped up those low, broad stairs and never have disturbed a sleeping inmate.

In the upper hall the air was better, but there was still that dampness that chilled one's blood—that charnel-house odor that froze one's marrow.

Opening a door at my right, I entered a room—another match showed me that it was what I longed for.

There were gorgeous hangings on every side, and a massive bed occupied one curtained corner.

Between two heavily draped windows stood a rosewood dressing-case, composed of drawers and a plate-glass mirror.

But the broad, velvet sofa was what I sought. It was a pity to soil the bed with my rain-soaked garments.

I turned the key in the door before I lay down, then smiled a little at my own precaution. I would hardly be disturbed in this deserted abode, unless it was by spirits or uncanny creatures.

I fell asleep, wondering about the house, about its presence and its gorgeous furnishings. The storm was raging as hard as ever—the last I remember was a peal of thunder.

Suddenly I awoke from a heavy sleep, and in a moment I had arisen to a sitting posture.

My hair was standing upright on my head with fright. I could feel my limbs stiffening as the thrill of terror swept through them.

What was it that trespassed on my stolen rest? I tried to cry out, but my tongue was speechless.

There was a hand upon the door that led to my room. Oh, how glad I was that it was securely fastened!

I strained my eyes, and my heart stood still. One moment of suspense, then—the door was opened.

Great God! What manner of thing was this? What hideous apparition had appeared before me?

Moving slowly, but screeching with shrill laughter as she came, a fearful, wizzen-faced old hag approached me from the open doorway.

I saw distinctly her sparse, gray hair framing her blear eyes and shrunken neck—then the skeleton-like arms, the wrinkled breasts—then——

As if I had been struck with a heavy hammer I fell back, stunned, among the pillows.

Was it woman or ghost that stood before me? A wraith from the tomb or the infernal regions?

It was only a head on a scrawny neck, a pair of arms set in bony shoulders, but below there was nothing in the shape of limbs or body.

Screaming with laughter this *thing* floated by at about the height of a medium tall woman, and as it moved slowly, like a person walking, it waved its gaunt arms in the blackness above it.

Then, though my body was like lead, my ears heard acutely as she talked and jibbered in an excitable manner.

"He is mine! He is mine!" she cried, over and over. "The bonny young lad with his golden tresses! To-night I shall hold his head on my breast. I have his promise at last, my own beautiful darling!"

"I will deck myself for my love!" she shrieked, then moved swiftly through the darkness to the massive mirror.

In the polished glass I could see her face even plainer than I had seen it when she passed me. There was a curious glow like phosphorescent flame that seemed to fall upon her, while the rest of the room was enveloped in darkness. Had the grave given up its dead, her flesh could never have been more hideous. Yet she gazed at herself and smiled in glee. She leered at her image and blew kisses at it from the tips of her crooked, claw-like fingers. Mumbling and jibbering she moved to and fro, arching her scrawny neck and uplifting her shoulders.

It was as though she was studying each hideous pose and selecting the one which would best please her lover.

Then, while I gazed, she bent her head and the bony fingers began toying with the keys that dangled in a bunch at the side of the mirror.

Selecting one she opened a drawer which she drew out entirely and dropped on the carpet. Again the ragged hair fell about the scrawny neck as she bent and thrust her arm into the aperture below her.

She must have touched a secret spring and discovered another drawer in the interior of the dresser, for a moment later she withdrew her hand fairly overflowing with precious jewels.

Over and over she returned to the drawer, bringing forth each time more exquisite treasures, and then breaking forth into peals

of shrill laughter she began decking her forehead, her neck and fingers.

"He will love me now!" she cried with pride, "when he sees the glitter of my costly trinkets! There are few who have diamonds and pearls like these—I will wear them to-night in my true love's honor! O, false, false men—I have probed your secrets—I have learned your natures through years of sorrow! Beauty is your god and wealth your master! See! I am blessed with wealth and beauty, can you not love me now, my bonny darling?"

There were diamonds and rubies shining in her hair, and her breast was ablaze with its mass of jewels.

Suddenly she threw her arms above her head, twirling and twisting them in fantastic contortions.

The gems on her brow seemed to shake and quiver; her bosom rose and fell in a rhythmical manner.

Like a flash of lightning it crossed my brain—she was dancing for joy, this unearthly old creature.

Flinging up her arms, she burst forth into song, her strident voice grating harshly on the air in time to the measure which her arms were beating.

"Haste, my love, the hour is near;
See, I deck myself to please thee!
Come, love, come, I wait thee here,
Love with kisses soon shall tease thee!
See the bright-eyed gems awaiting,
See the lips thou soon shalt press!
Midnight is the time for mating,
Hasten to thy bride's caress!"

The hideous song ended in a hollow laugh, and the motions of the head and bosom gradually subsided.

What next would she do? I stared in horror. The ghostly dance had nearly bereft me of reason.

Slowly the long arms were extended before her, and the head began swaying with a different motion, which was as unmistakable as the other. It did not need the mockery of her raven's croak to see that she was crooning a lullaby, and rocking in her arms an imaginary baby.

Never shall I forget that sight! My God! It is before me at this very minute!

Mad with the passion of love, she sang, or rather croaked, as to a sleeping infant. Hushing and cooing as a mother would, she rocked and soothed it on her scrawny bosom.

Suddenly she stopped in her cradle song—it was evident that she was done with her motherhood's fancies.

Breathlessly she glided back to the mirror, and with husky tones continued her talking.

“Aha! My cunning shall conquer yet! He *shall* love me! He *shall*—my bonny darling!

“Do you care for rubies, my pet?” she cried, as she clasped a fire-red bracelet on her skeleton wrist, “or is it sapphires like these that will give you most pleasure?

“Ah! He is young and proud, the lad I love, but I shall feel the throb of his heart on my own. To-night! To-night—he shall be my husband!”

She tossed her arms far above her head; the flash of her jewels lit the apartment.

“Hark! Whose was that footstep?” she suddenly screamed, then like a frightened thief kept still and listened.

Gliding by me again towards the outer door, the head, arms and bosom came close within my vision.

With the gems in her locks they looked grayer than ever, and each hair stood out stiffly like a fragment of metal. Her eyes were rolling in a frightened way. She was gnawing her chin with the fang that was longest.

Close to the door she placed her ear, then withdrew it again and hurried back to the mirror.

“It is he! It is he!”

She was muttering now, but my ears were so tense that they caught every whisper.

“He has come, my beloved! I know his dear step!”

She jerked at her jewels in the delirium of happiness.

Had he come? I listened in vain for a step. I was mad with the longing to witness this meeting!

In the horror of the scene I had comprehended it all, but its grewsome fascination I could not fathom.

She was a wretched old woman of miserly wealth, who had eaten out her heart with misguided passion. She loved a young man and would wed him, she said.

Was it her or her jewels that he longed for?

I wondered.

He was coming. I knew it by the joy in her face and by the way she extended her arms in welcome.

The rubies flared on her breast as she moved; the emeralds gleamed like the eyes of a dragon.

Turning until she faced the outer door, she stood, half gasping, in her mad exultation.

I saw the lean arms rise to encircle his neck, and the hideous lips protrude as though she would kiss him. In the rapture of the moment she seemed to forget her jewels.

But in one brief moment her joy had fled, and with the miser's instinct she was guarding her treasure.

Had he turned upon her then in this moment of her bliss? She shrieked like a fiend as she darted from him.

Scream after scream pierced the air, awakening into life every slumbering echo. Shriller and sharper rose that blood-curdling cry from the dry, rasping throat of this hideous vision.

"Murder! Help! Murder!"

The cry filled my ears.

"Save me!"

The cry thrilled my marrow with horror.

Even in her terror she returned to the mirror—it seemed as if she was guarding the secret drawer while she struggled with her ghostly assailant.

The face of the mirror still reflected her features, but, merciful God! What a horrible picture!

Like one whose throat had been clutched in a merciless grasp, she strangled and choked 'til her temples were livid.

There was madness in the stare of those fast glazing eyes as they turned toward the thing that had thus come upon her.

Fiercely the long, bony arms beat the air. I could see the skeleton fingers as they clawed into darkness.

Was she struggling with him whom she so blindly adored, or was it some foe who had intruded upon her?

Fainter and fainter her cries rent the air—she was choking again, I could hear her death gurgle.

I strained my hot eyes for a sight of his face—I would have given my life for a glimpse of his person!

How had he entered, and what was his shape? The strain on my brain was almost driving me frantic.

But the woman alone was all I could see—the hideous old head and the trunkless bosom.

Lower and lower bent the wizzened neck, as though with the presence of his weight upon it.

The lank, bony arms were losing their strength. With a horrid groan she gave up the struggle.

Down the old head fell with a dying grimace, and the unearthly vision was swallowed up in darkness.

After it was over, my strength revived; the blood began slowly to flow through my members.

Rising to my feet, I struck a match, then slowly crept over to the scene of the struggle.

On my hands and knees I traversed the spot, finding no sign or vestige of the murdered woman.

A sigh of relief escaped my lips as I rose to my feet before the mirror.

In another moment I was fumbling with the keys that still dangled in their place beside the glass, and even in my terror of limb and brain I promptly selected the one which I had seen the woman use when she discovered the hiding-place of her jewels.

Passing my hand over the surface of the dressing-case I found every drawer in its proper position, but just as I had seen her do, I drew out one drawer and dropped it gently upon the carpet.

Then, thrusting in my hand, I explored the cavity. In a moment I had found the secret drawer; I tried the key; the drawer flew open!

What my fingers touched I could not see, but I knew by the feeling that they were precious jewels.

Rings, brooches and necklaces, I drew them forth, and even the reflection of my feeble match made them shine and sparkle with resplendent luster.

In a fever of excitement I continued my search until I was confident that not a gem had escaped me.

But my limbs were trembling as with an ague chill; I dared not remain there a moment longer.

How I reached the road I do not know, but reaction of some kind must have followed promptly, for I was found, they tell me, lying unconscious in the road, my pockets fairly bulging with the mysterious jewels.

SEPTEMBER
1897.

THE WHITE ELEPHANT



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EVERETT McNEIL

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M. QUAD

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